The Landscape of the Soul: A Metaphorical Model of Christian Mysticism

Nancy Ault

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ABSTRACT

What would happen if Christian spiritual life is seen, not as a pilgrimage through a landscape, but as the landscape itself? In order to explore this question, this thesis expands the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul' into a model of Christian spiritual life. The 'landscape of the soul' is treated as a system; with its input being God's self-revelation of love through Jesus Christ; its transformational process being the re-creation of a person through the love of God; and its output being union with God. In a representational mapping of the model, three interrelated networks of systems are identified: a geology representing physical and psychological processes relating to human experiencing; a geomorphology connected with human growth and development; and an ecology depicting the flow of God's love through various interrelationships present in the 'landscape of the soul'. These systems are considered with reference to three characteristics of landscape: matrix, the area that is most prominent; patches, areas that are different from the common matrix; and corridors, areas that facilitate the flow of information, energy or materials. The 'landscape of the soul' is also thematically mapped using different types of understandings that are associated with mysticism. The geological network is seen as analogous to those discourses that interpret mysticism as a distinct type of altered state of consciousness; the geomorphological network, with those understandings that link mysticism with stages in prayer or psycho-spiritual development; and the ecological network, with those understandings that associate mysticism with the encounter and relationship with God in Christ. From this thematic exploration, the model proposes that the altered state of consciousness in the geology of experiencing be likened to being-in-love with God; that the process represented by stages in the geomorphology of growing be seen as the deepening and honing of attention to God; and the relationship depicted in the ecology of relating be perceived as a mutual self-giving between God and a person in an exchange of love. The model is tested in an individual case study of the life and writings of Clare of Assisi and through a survey of spiritual directors and therapists. A model of Christian life based upon the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul' emphasises an encounter with Christ in the present moment and provides a framework in which some different understandings of mysticism can be situated. Moreover, what emerges is a distinctly Christian understanding of a mysticism of everyday in which the apophatic and transformational encounter with God is grounded in Christ.

Declaration

I declare that I composed this thesis and that the work contained therein is my own, except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text.

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CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

PART ONE: LANDSCAPE AS A METAPHOR IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

1. INTRODUCTION

Landscape is a recurring motif in the narratives of individuals telling their stories in spiritual direction.[1] It can function both to provide images with which to describe God as well as provide a backdrop against which spiritual life may be described as a pilgrimage or journey. The purpose of this thesis is to examine Christian spiritual life, not in terms of a pilgrimage **through** a landscape, but **as** the landscape itself.

In ancient Chinese wisdom, landscape is described as 'the life movement of the Spirit expressed in the rhythm of living things'.[2] If 'the life movement of the Spirit' in Christian life is considered as a landscape, the question can be raised whether the principles of geography could contribute towards our understanding of Christian spirituality, particularly with respect to what we conceive as mystical. In this thesis, I will probe this question through the exploration of the metaphor the 'landscape of the soul'. [3]

1.1 CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Before defining what is meant by landscape in this thesis and proceeding to examine some of the uses of landscape in spiritual direction, it is necessary to consider how I interpret Christian spirituality. This concern is important first, because the model that will be developed and tested in subsequent chapters is

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[1] This thesis arises out of the conjunction of training as a physical geographer and over 15 years accompanying others as a spiritual director.
[2] J. G. Lubbock, 1990, *Landscapes of the Soul*, London: Bertran Rota Ltd., 37.
[3] In his essay on C S Lewis, Colin Manlove refers to the setting of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, as 'a landscape of the soul'. It is from this reference that the central metaphor and the title for this thesis are taken. (Colin Manlove, 1992, *Christian Fantasy*, Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 238.)

restricted to a Christian understanding of spiritual life. Second, this interpretation of Christian spirituality provides the assumptions that will underlie the metaphorical elaboration of landscape.[4] Throughout this thesis, I will draw upon a wide range of literature to illustrate and construct the model of the 'landscape of the soul'.

It is possible to find numerous definitions or explanations of spirituality. For example, an all-inclusive definition is found in the 'Note on "Spirituality"' at the beginning of *The Study of Spirituality*:

> Spirituality means a search for meaning and significance by contemplation and reflection on the totality of human experiences in relation to the whole world which is experienced and also to the life which is lived and may mature as that search proceeds.[5]

Other definitions reflect this comprehensive understanding of spirituality as a way of constructing a meaning for and understanding of life. For example, Gordon Wakefield describes it as 'those attitudes, beliefs, practices which animate people's lives and help them to reach out towards super-sensible realities'.[6] In Wakefield's definition another element of spirituality is explicitly expressed. This is those 'super-sensible realities' towards which a person may reach and with which, it might be added, a person may be confronted. Spirituality can be elaborated further. Alan Ecclestone sees spirituality as 'the area of response that human beings discover and speak about on their becoming aware of God'.[7] Here, from a Christian perspective, we take a step towards a relational understanding of spirituality.

Such definitions of spirituality suggest that it is an integral part of human living and the creation of meaning to interpret that life. They also suggest that spirituality is linked to a reality beyond human senses and finally, that this reality can be called God. According to Walter Principe, in its early Pauline usage:

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[4] There are many understandings of God and spirituality, even in the Christian tradition.
[5] Cheslyn Jones, 1986, Note on 'Spirituality', in *The Study of Spirituality*, eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold, London: SPCK, xxv-xxvi.
[6] Gordon S. Wakefield, 1983, Spirituality, in *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Gordon S. Wakefield, London: SCM Press Ltd., 361.
[7] Alan Ecclestone, 1986, Some Intimations of Spirituality, in *Spirituality and Human Wholeness*, Introduced by Kate McIlhagga, London: The British Council of Churches, 5.

> The "spirit" within the human person is all that is ordered, led, or influenced by the *Pneuma Theou* or *Spiritus Dei*, whereas *sarx* or *caro* or "flesh" is everything in a person that is opposed to this influence of the Spirit of God.[8]

In this sense, spiritual life is that life which is governed by the Spirit of God. As Principe points out, the disparity between spirit and flesh is not an opposition of mind and will against the body and the material world.[9] Rather, these contrasts represent activities through which a person's life is orientated. Hence, a person could intentionally resist the movements of the Spirit of God in his or her life. This is well expressed in Francis Thompson's poem, 'The Hound of Heaven':

> I fled Him, down the night and down the days;
> I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
> I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
> Of my own mind...[10]

Whatever the circumstances or reasons, it is possible for a person to draw back or flee from engagement with God, or in Wakefield's terms, 'super-sensible realities'. The consequence of this rejection is a disharmony between the life of the person and the promptings of the Spirit of God. In contrast, to be led by the Spirit of God, that is, to be spiritual, means that all aspects of a person's life are in harmony with the will of God. From this perspective, the spiritual is linked to the way that a person lives his or her life. Moreover, this activity is comprehensive. That is, it includes all dimensions of human living ranging from religious beliefs to physical attributes.

Seen in this way, spirituality becomes action, an action that includes the gamut of dispositions, attitudes and motives that characterise an individual. Moreover, this action takes place in relation to another, God. According to John Macmurray, in *Persons in Relation*, intentional action is 'the distinguishing characteristic of the personal'.[11] Consequently, he recommends a move from a reflective definition of self based on 'I think' to one based on 'I do'. However, knowledge and action go together.[12] Macmurray argues that:

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[8] Walter Principe, 1983, Toward Defining Spirituality, *Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion* 12(1): 130.
[9] Ibid., 130.
[10] Francis Thompson, [no date], *The Hound of Heaven*, London: Burns and Oates, p. 15.
[11] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 24.
[12] Ibid., 15-27.

> To do, and to know that I do, are two aspects of one and the same experience. *This* knowledge is absolute and necessary. It is not, however, knowledge of an object but what we may call "knowledge in action".[13]

Choice is a factor of action and thus action contains a deliberate, intended dimension.[14] In addition, action requires a backdrop to act upon and therefore, involves the material world. Similarly, as an agent, an individual exists in relation to others:

> The idea of an isolated agent is self-contradictory. Any agent is necessarily in relation to the Other. Apart from this essential relation he does not exist. But, further, the Other in this constitutive relation must itself be personal. Persons, therefore, are constituted by their mutual relation to one another. "I" exist only as one element in the complex "You and I".[15]

Above, it was suggested that spirituality is relational and in so far as it linked to the way that a person lives, it is essentially active. If we are agents, as Macmurray proposes, acting in relation to God as the 'Other', or the 'You', rather than as an object, then the relationship can be perceived as personal. In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth refers to God as 'Abba, Father' (e.g. Mark 14.36) and other people as 'brother[s] and sister[s] and mother[s]' (e.g. Matt. 12.47-50).[16] Each of these represents a particular exemplar where 'the unit of personal existence is not the individual, but two persons in personal relation'.[17]

Considering these points, certain themes that can be related to Christian spirituality begin to emerge: it is embodied; it is personal; and it is dynamic. In this thesis, I use these characteristics as markers in Christian spiritual life. First, Christian spirituality is embodied in the physical world. It is grounded in an

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[13] John Macmurray, 1957, *The Self as Agent*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 90-91.

[14] Macmurray identifies both a negative and positive dimension comprising intentional action. Thus, even in the most personal interaction, the other is in varying degrees an object:

> The impersonal aspect of the personal is always present, and necessarily so. It is not always noticed, yet it may be; and at times it may monopolize our attention so that we miss the meaning of the words he speaks or of the movements he makes.

What differentiates a personal and an impersonal relation is that in the latter, the impersonal aspect is deliberate. The other is intentionally treated as an object as in the example of the master and the slave. (John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 33-34.)

[15] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 24.

[16] I qualify this statement because in these relationships, it is possible to treat the other as an object rather than a 'You'.

[17] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 61.

historical event – the revelation of God manifested in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth. As such, God's revelation does not portray an escape from creation and the material world. Rather, it involves an incarnation into physical creation and the totality of human life. Thus, Christian spirituality, according to the interpretation that I am developing, begins with God's action in the world. If this action is conceived as God's address to humankind, then it invites a human response.[18] Therefore, there is a dual dynamic in Christian spirituality – God's address and human response. Moreover, this dialogue occurs in the concrete situations of everyday. Kate McIlhagga supports such a view in her introduction to a collection of essays on spirituality and wholeness. She writes:

> All of life is spiritual, for all is part of God's creation. There is no division between sacred and secular, work and worship, religion and politics. Spirituality is not apart from our daily lives, it is our daily lives.[19]

Every aspect of human life is touched – physical, psychological, social, cultural and political. The consequence of God's action in the Incarnation and Passion of Christ is that human response is possible from any situation. Thus, Rowan Williams claims that Christian spirituality 'must now touch every area of human experience, the public and social, the painful, negative, even pathological byways of the mind, the moral and relational world'.[20] Therefore, the whole of life becomes 'a theatre for God's creative work'.[21]

Second, Christian spirituality is personal. Both John Macmurray and more recently Alistair McFadyen contend that personhood is created through our relationships.[22] McFadyen suggests that God's interaction with creation can be

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[18] Alistair McFadyen develops a thesis that personhood is created through God's address or call and humankind's response. (Alistair McFadyen, 1990, *The Call to Personhood*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.)
[19] Kate McIlhagga, 1986, Introduction, in *Spirituality and Human Wholeness*, 1.
[20] Rowan Williams, 1979, *The Wound of Knowledge*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2.
[21] Ibid., 2.
[22] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*; Alistair I McFadyen, 1990, *The Call to Personhood.*

conceived as communication, 'the transfer of information'.[23] He conceives the personal in terms of a dialogical relationship in which persons 'are structures of response sedimented from past relations in which they have been addressed, have been responded to and have communicated themselves in particular forms'.[24] That is, a person is the product of all past communications.

As we have seen, Macmurray agues that the unit of the personal consists of 'You and I'.[25] Furthermore, he contends that community is created through the unity of persons in a fellowship of love.[26] This is in contrast to a society where the members are linked through sharing a common purpose rather than through a network of mutual love for one another.[27] Since, God is the 'universal Other', the 'infinite Agent', to whom everyone is related, Macmurray sees religion as representing the 'celebration of communion – of the fellowship of all things in God'.[28] At Baptism, a person is incorporated into the Body of Christ and as such, becomes part of a community of believers, although the mutuality of affection envisioned by Macmurray is frequently lost in institutional schisms. Nevertheless, Christian spirituality contains a potential communal dimension.[29]

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[23] Alistair I. McFadyen, 1990, *The Call to Personhood*, Cambridge, 18-23. In attempting to define what it means to be a 'person' and in the attempt to avoid either individualism or collectivism, McFadyen conceives the personal in terms of communication. He writes:

> Communication does not just refer to speech or to other forms of linguistic communication; it embraces every interaction in which there is change and exchange – between people, between them and their environment, them and God, or between any relatively discrete entity or system and another – and that, by definition, is every interaction. Essentially it is the transfer of information. Information is any content of communication which has some meaning; that which is not simply 'noise', but which is coded or ordered in a way which may produce an effect on those receiving it. For the recipient to find a communication informative, its content must be sufficiently new and different form present states (say, of understanding or knowledge) to make a difference, whilst sufficiently close to those states to make contact with them, be relevant and have meaning. The communication may then be said to have informed the recipient, in so far as the recipient has been changed by it. (Ibid., 6-7.)

[24] Ibid., 41

[25] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 24.

[26] Ibid., 157.

[27] Ibid., 157-158.

[28] Ibid., 164, 223; 165.

[29] This communal dimension is tenuous in the case of those who are called to solitary forms of life where their only link with other Christians may be through their activity of prayer.

Both Macmurray and McFadyen identify freedom of choice and autonomy as necessary for personal relationships or communication.[30] Otherwise, action becomes manipulative and communication becomes a matter of stimulus and response rather than 'call and response'.[31] Granted we can freely respond to God's address and that our response occurs within the context of daily life, what sort of actions can be identified? Ecclestone observed that Christian spirituality involves the activity of becoming aware of God.[32]

This last point brings us to the third theme being used to describe Christian spirituality: it is dynamic. If we think of the person as an 'agent', then the process of becoming aware of God or attending to God needs to realised in action. As we have seen earlier, McFayden conceives God's interaction with humankind in terms of call and response. An example of God's call and human response occurs in the Old Testament when Moses renews God's covenant with the people of Israel in Moab.[33] After enumerating the actions required to be God's people – loving God, walking with God and obeying God's commandments – Moses commands the people to 'choose life'. In this example, human response includes the activities of loving, walking with and obeying God. Through these activities, a positive response can be made to God's address.

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[30] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 158; Alistair I. McFadyen, 1990, *The Call to Personhood*, 19.

[31] Alistair I. McFadyen, 1990, *The Call to Personhood*, 19.

[32] Alan Ecclestone, 1986, Some Intimations of Spirituality, 5.

[33] In Deuteronomy it is recorded:

> See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are lead astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord you God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob (Deut 31:15-20).

All scriptural quotations are taken from the New Standard Revised Version in the Cambridge Study Bible, 1993, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Choice is also pivotal in Edward Kinerk's conception of Christian spirituality. He maintains that spirituality is '*the expression of a dialectical personal growth from the inauthentic to the authentic*' where authenticity is defined as a person's 'complete transcendence in love'.[34] According to Kinerk, growth is contingent upon choices that lead to an increase in love. Similar to Moses' injunction to the people of Israel, choice in this usage moves beyond intellectual assent or denial into actions that according to Kinerk are manifested by an increase in love. Kinerk associates the intensification of love in terms of 'personal growth'.[35] This point highlights an overall activity that may generally be referred to as 'growing'.

Christian life is characterised by a dual dynamic. In baptism, a person is incorporated into the body of Christ and thus into Christ's death and resurrection.[36] Although at baptism, a person is united to Christ through the Spirit, a person is also initiated into a process of becoming transformed into Christ:

> And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor 3.18).

'Putting on Christ' is a transformational process involving growth in the virtues of faith, hope and love (Gal 3.27). Paul conceived spiritual life, that is, new life in Christ, as a life lived in accordance to the will of God.[37] The process involves growth in transcendental love, the displacement of an egocentric mode of action and a re-

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[34] Edward Kinerk, Toward a Method for the Study of Spirituality, in *The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction*, ed. David L Fleming, St. Louis, MO: Review for Religious, 21 [italics in the original]. Authenticity has also been conceived as the integration of physical, psychological and spiritual elements in the life of an individual. (Daniel A Helminiak, 1987, *Spiritual Development*, Chicago: Loyola University Press, 35-37, 89-91.)

[35] Edward Kinerk, Toward a Method for the Study of Spirituality, in *The Christian Ministry of Spiritual Direction*, 24.

[36] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.(Romans 6.3-4).

[37] Paul argues that when a person is 'in Christ', he or she has become a new creation and hence perceives and acts in the world from this perspective (2 Cor 5. 16-21).

focusing on and the aligning of one's actions with God.[38] Jesus illustrates this process in the Garden of Gethsemane where he relinquishes his will and intends that God's will be done (Matthew 26: 39). In addition, the displacement of an egocentric mode of action can also be made through refocusing on others. Jesus gives an example of such self-transcendent love in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-28), where the 'other' for the Samaritan is the man who is robbed and beaten. Similarly, in his own life, Jesus demonstrates this love through the washing of his disciples' feet at the Last Supper (John 13: 3-17).

To recapitulate what has been observed about Christian spirituality, we started with the Pauline conception that to be spiritual was to act in accordance with God's will. More specifically, it was seen that this action takes place in daily life and constitutes a personal relationship between the individual and God – God's address and human response. Christian spirituality is historical and as Philip Sheldrake observes, it 'is rooted within the lived experience of God's presence' and is 'always specific.'[39] Throughout Christian history, the perception of and response to God has varied. In the Western world, various 'schools of spirituality' evolved such as the Augustinian, Benedictine, Franciscan, Carmelite and Ignatian. These 'schools' reflected and emphasised different characteristics and practices that can reflect the relationship between God and humanity.

In addition, our presuppositions influence our understanding of Christian spirituality. For example, Elizabeth Liebert maintains that many pastors and spiritual directors fail to recognise or acknowledge the active presence of God in a person's life because of their prejudices.[40] In a secular context, a lack of awareness and recognition of the movements of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual can result

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[38] John Macmurray refers to this as 'heterocentricity':

> By this is meant that the centre of reference for the agent, when he seeks to act rightly, is always the personal Other. To act rightly is then to act for the sake of the Other and not of oneself. (John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 122.)

[39] Philip Sheldrake, 1991, *Spirituality and History*, London: SPCK, 33.

[40] Elizabeth Liebert, 1989, Eyes to See and Ears to Hear: Identifying Religious Experience in Pastoral Spiritual Guidance, *Pastoral Psychology* 37(4): 297-310.

in a crisis in spiritual life being interpreted as pathological.[41] In recognition of such mis-diagnoses, spiritual disorders now form a category in the American *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.[42] How comfortable the participants in spiritual direction are with speaking or hearing about personal experiences relating to God and how such experiences are perceived and integrated into a person's life, are, to a certain degree, contingent upon the beliefs which are operative and the metaphoric models that are used to interpret such experience.

With this last point, we come to the focus of this thesis – the exploration of the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul'. I will begin with the definition of landscape that will be used in this thesis. I will then examine how images drawn from landscape are used to describe spiritual life.

1.2 What is Landscape?

Landscape is a nebulous concept. It can evoke a variety of images ranging

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[41] What if a spiritual crisis is pathological? What is meant by pathological and how are spiritual experiences distinguished from the pathological? Woollcott and Desai suggest that mystic illumination be considered along a continuum according to the '(1) degree of clarity of perception, (2) degree of integration versus projection, and (3) level of moral or ethical development as reflected in relationships'. However, what ultimately distinguishes authentic experience from pathological experience is that the former is characterised by an 'essential affinity with others' and love (Philip Woollcott, Jr. and Prakash Desai, 1990, Religious and Creative States of Illumination: A Perspective from Psychiatry, in *Religious and Ethical Factors in Psychiatric Practice*, ed. Don Browning, Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 241, 258). For a further consideration of spiritual crisis, see Christina Grof and Stanislav Grof, 1986, Spiritual Emergency: the Understanding and Treatment of Transpersonal Crisis, *ReVison* 8(2): 7-20; Judith Miller, 1990, Mental Illness and Spiritual Crisis: Implications for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal* 14(2): 29-47; Ron Johnson, 1991, Making a Friendly Diagnosis, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 10(1): 66-71; Larry L Fahlberg, John Wolfer and Lauri A Fahlberg, 1992, Personal Crisis: Growth or Pathology?, *American Journal of Health Promotion* 7(1): 45-52.

[42] Roberta Russell, 1994, Do you Have a Spiritual Disorder?, *The Psychologist* 7: 384. The entry reads:

> Religious or Spiritual Problem: This category can be used when the focus of clinical attention is a religious or spiritual problem. Examples include distressing experiences that involve loss or questioning of faith, problems associated with conversion to a new faith, or questions of spiritual values that may not necessarily be related to an organized church or religious institution.

(*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-IV*, 1994, 4th Edition, Washington, DC: The American Psychiatric Association.)

from wilderness tracks, pastoral scenes and even urban chaos. Visual representations of landscape such as in paintings or photographs vary from small, intimate spaces to large, grandiose vistas. Likewise, the subject matter ranges from scenes of untouched wilderness to the impersonal sprawl of urban life.

The current usage of the word is derived from the Dutch '*landscap*', which was introduced into the English language in the late sixteenth century through the activities of art dealers and critics. At this time, the word landscape was used to describe 'a picture of (Dutch) inland scenery'.[43] Subsequently, it became associated with aesthetics. Influenced by the Romantic Movement, there was an increased emphasis on 'natural' landscapes. Particularly in North America, the concept of landscape has become associated with wilderness areas untouched by human activities. However, many of the American wilderness areas are artificially delineated and maintained by human vigilance.

An older medieval understanding of 'landscape' meant 'a collection of lands'.[44] In this definition, a 'land' was 'a defined space, a space with boundaries'.[45] Thus, a landscape was a composite of 'man-made spaces on the land', a '*synthetic* space' created to serve a community.[46] Interestingly, Zev Naveh and Arthur S Lieberman claim that the earliest reference to landscape in literature occurs in those Psalms in which the city, Jerusalem, is described. They suggest that 'landscape', '*noff*' in Hebrew, is probably related to '*yafe*' or 'beautiful' as in Psalm 48.2:

> Beautiful and lofty, the joy of all the earth,
> is the hill of Zion,
> the very centre of the world
> and the city of the great king.[47]

The landscape depicted in this piece of poetry illustrates the understanding of 'landscape' as a human-environment system. The city of Jerusalem is an artificial, human system that is situated in relation to its environment on the hill of Zion. In

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[43] J B Jackson, 1986, The Vernacular Landscape, in *Landscape Meanings and Values*, eds. Edmund C Penning-Rowsell and David Lowenthal, London: Allen and Unwin, 79.
[44] Ibid., 67.
[45] Ibid., 67.
[46] Ibid., 68.
[47] Zev Naveh and Arthur S Lieberman, 1984, *Landscape Ecology*, New York: Springer-Verlag, 3.

this thesis, I interpret landscape as such a '*synthetic* space'. Therefore, I define landscape as a composite of natural and human systems.

As I have already observed, natural landscapes such as the American wilderness interact with or are defined by human activities. In the early nineteenth century, the geographer, A von Humboldt, defined landscape as 'Der Totalcharakter einer Erdgegend', that is 'the total character of an Earth region'.[48] If such is the case, then landscape cannot be reduced solely to its geology and geomorphology, that is, its 'horizontal' or physiographic characteristics. Landscape will also incorporate a 'vertical' or ecological component and hence include humankind.[49] Similarly, in 1979, I S Zonneveld defined landscape as:

> A part of the space on the earth's surface, consisting of a complex of systems, formed by the activity of rock, water, air, plants, animals, and man and that by its physiognomy forms a recognizable entity.[50]

By this definition a landscape consists of different elements that interact in such a way as to create a spatial area that is recognised as a distinct and holistic unit. Again, as in Humboldt's understanding, landscape is comprised of both physical and ecological dimensions, the 'horizontal' and the 'vertical'. If the human dimension is included in the concept of landscape, landscape can be conceived as a network of interacting systems such as the atmospheric, the geological, the geomorphological, the ecological and the human. Thus, thinking in terms of systems will form an integral part of a model based on landscape and I will expand this idea more fully in Chapter 2.

However, before moving to the exploration and development of landscape as a metaphor for spiritual life, I will briefly look at how landscape is already used because this provides a starting point illustrating how elements of landscape can underlie our presuppositions as well as our discourse about spiritual life. Then, I will address the question of why a model of spiritual life based on landscape and landscape principles might be beneficial in spiritual direction.

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[48] Zev Naveh and Arthur S Lieberman, 1984, *Landscape Ecology*, 4.
[49] Ibid., 4-5.
[50] I S Zonneveld, 1979/1986, quoted by Richard T T Forman and Michel Godron, *Landscape Ecology*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 7-8.

1.3 The Use of Images From Landscape to Describe Spiritual Life

Landscape pervades the process of spiritual direction at several levels. It provides a source of images that can be used to describe the nature of God and spiritual life. Furthermore, landscape can contribute to the development and articulation of our perception of spiritual life.

1.3.1 Scripture and Tradition as Sources of Landscape Images

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, landscape has traditionally supplied images that describe God and God's relationship with humankind.[51] This tradition reflects a universe that is permeated with sacred realities and symbolism.[52] Landscape plays several roles in Biblical usage. It can describe the nature of God as well as reveal the right attitude that creation should take towards its Creator. In addition, landscape acts as a backdrop against which the work of salvation is revealed. For pre-modern Christian writers the Bible provided a precedent for using landscape to describe God and spiritual life. Although presuppositions such as the existence of God cannot be taken for granted in contemporary society, landscape imagery drawn from Biblical sources and traditions continues to permeate the stories that people tell.[53]

What is the nature of God? What is the proper attitude that creation should take towards God? These questions are addressed pictorially through landscape images. For instance, the psalmist describes God as a strong rock, that is, enduring and steadfast. Similarly God is like a fortress protecting and guarding the people (Psalm 18. 2). In these examples, particular landscape elements, a rock and a fortress, are used to depict the nature of God. However, a whole landscape, itself, can disclose the nature of God's generosity in creation. Thus:

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[51] Janet Martin Soskice, 1985, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 156-159. For an exposition of the role of the desert in the Bible, see Andrew Louth, 1991, *The Wilderness of God*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Chapter 2: 26-42.
[52] Sallie McFague, 1982, *Metaphorical Theology*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1-2.
[53] Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, London: Sheed and Ward, 49-50.

> You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
> they flow between the hills,
> giving drink to every wild animal;
> By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
> they sing among the branches.
> From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
> the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. (Psalm 104. 10-13.)

In this picture of the world, God creates and sustains the world. Furthermore, the whole of creation, from the heavens to the blades of grass, witnesses to the greatness of God:

> The heavens are telling the glory of God;
> and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
> ....
> There is no speech, nor are there words;
> their voice is not heard;
> yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
> and their words to the end of the world. (Psalm 19. 1, 3-4.)

Here, the proper response to God is praise and thanksgiving. Hence, 'the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord...' (Psalm 98. 8).

Similarly, landscape is used to indicate how humankind should act in relation to others. For example, Jesus tells his disciples that they are the 'the light of the world'. He then compares this 'light' to the landscape image of a 'city built on a hill' (Matt 5. 14). These landscape images come after the teaching of the Beatitudes and hence suggest that the disciples are to manifest to other people the blessings associated with these injunctions and in this way give glory to God (Matt 5. 14). Thus, in Biblical usage, the landscape acts as an exemplar of the appropriate relationship between God and creation. In addition, landscape images can provide a pattern for social relations.

The landscape is literally the work of God's hand. As such, it can act as the visual and spatial manifestation of God's interaction with creation. Geological and geomorphological processes such as those promised in Isaiah –

> Every valley shall be lifted up,
> and every mountain and hill be made low;
> the uneven ground shall become level,
> and the rough places a plain.
> (Is 40. 4.)

– illustrate God's redeeming love to the chosen people, Israel. Similarly, the transformation of the desert is used to portray God's care for Israel:

> I will open rivers on the bare heights,
> and fountains in the midst of the valleys;
> I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
> and the dry land springs of water.
> I will put in the wilderness the cedar,
> the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;
> I will set in the desert the cypress,
> the plane and the pine together...
> (Is 41. 18.)

Conversely, the desolation of fertile places symbolises God's wrath. Thus, the landscape and its processes act as a vehicle to present a conception of God and God's work.

Landscapes or landscape features depict or act as the backdrop to the encounter between God and humankind. For example, in Exodus, Moses ascends Mount Sinai to speak with God:

> Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently (Ex 19. 18).

The ascent of Moses into the 'darkness where God was' (Ex 20. 21) became a paradigmatic model for spiritual life.[54] Similarly, the story of the exodus of the Hebrews through the desert became a model for the people of God as pilgrims travelling through a strange land.[55] Through Biblical stories, mountains and wilderness areas have been incorporated into the Christian, religious imagination and have become mediators of symbolic truths.

1.3.2 Landscape as a Formative Element in Spirituality

As well as providing images to describe God and our relationship to God, the physical landscape can be a formative element in the development of a person's spiritual life.[56] The particular landform features that are incorporated into religious

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[54] Andrew Louth, 1991, *The Wilderness of God*, 33.
[55] Iris M Yob, 1989, The Pragmatist and Pilgrimage: Revitalizing an Old Metaphor for Religious Education, *Religious Education*, 84: 521-522.
[56] Anthony J Gittins, 1992, Toward Integral Spirituality: Embodiment, Ecology, and Experience of God, in *Common Journey, Different Paths*, ed. Susan Rakoczy, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 46.

consciousness are dependent upon local landscape as well as the traditional landscapes associated with the stories of faith. There is a complex interplay between the physical landscape and the shaping of theological formulations. In his examination of the relationship between place and American spirituality, Belden Lane observes that the 'plain givenness of our occupation of space is the inescapable context of our experiencing the sacred.'[57] However, because of its 'plain givenness', landscape frequently acts as a hidden variable in pastoral care, hidden because it is taken for granted.

In recounting their stories, people often make use of the landscape features with which they are familiar, using them to illustrate their perception of their relationship with God.[58] For example, in her *Life*, Teresa of Avila described the soul as a garden which may be watered in four ways: by a well, by a water-wheel and irrigation channel, by a stream or by heavy rainfall.[59] These images reflect elements that would have been common in the agricultural landscapes with which Teresa was accustomed and she uses them to describe the relationship between the soul and God. Thus, those who draw water from the well are likened to beginners who must concentrate and labour in their prayer in contrast to those who are in union with God and receive the rain of God without effort on their part.[60] The choice of landscape images used in spiritual direction is influenced not only by everyday environments but also by inherited traditions. For instance, in Hindu spirituality, the mountain, the forest, the cultivated field, the river and the ocean are the five landscapes through which a spiritual pilgrim journeys. For these pilgrims, there are no deserts.[61] However, the desert is a popular image in Christianity, having been borrowed from Scripture, as well as the geographical background of the Incarnation.

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[57] Belden C Lane, 1988, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*, New York: Paulist Press, 188.

[58] For example, the Great Plains of the United States underlies and shapes the story of spiritual life in the book, *Dakota*, by Kathleen Norris (Kathleen Norris, 1993, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company).

[59] Teresa of Avila, 1946, *The Life of the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus*, in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, trans Allison Peers, Vol 3, London: Sheed and Ward, 11:5,6.

[60] Ibid., Chapters 11-21.

[61] The Indian artist and theologian, Jyoti Sahi enumerated these five landscapes in a discussion during a workshop focusing on spiritual stories held in Edinburgh, at the Netherbow, November 1994.

The desert, the wilderness and the mountain are key landscapes that have influenced the articulation of Christian theology and spiritual life. Belden Lane writes that:

> Early Christian monasticism was so inextricably tied to a particular geographic terrain that the connection between the monk and the desert was never questioned. The choice of vocation and the choice of landscape were almost always one.[62]

The early monks felt that they were purified through the harshness of the desert environment and later, through other wilderness environments. Concomitant with this radical re-formation of life-style was a growth in simplicity and freedom from self-centred models of reality. This process was reflected in their apophatic theology of abandonment and renunciation.[63]

Teresa of Avila used local landscape features and processes to describe the nature of prayer. The extreme living conditions of the desert stripped its early Christian inhabitants of all that was extraneous to life and thus enabled a single-minded focus on and abandonment to God. From these examples, the associations that are drawn between landscape and the religious imagination are clear. However, the interaction between landscape and human consciousness is complex. Lynn Ross-Bryant claims that 'the land as background illuminates and influences the foreground of our conceptualizations without being conceptualized itself'.[64] However, such a process is by no means straightforward because of the preconceptions and traditions through which people interact and interpret their landscapes. For instance, drawing from Biblical traditions, the early Europeans perceived the wilderness of America both as an earthly paradise and 'the vineyard of the Lord' and as a place of purification, following the example of Christ's temptation in the wilderness.[65]

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[62] Belden C Lane, 1993, Desert Catechesis: The Landscape and Theology of Early Christian Monasticism, *Anglican Theological Review*, 75: 292.
[63] Ibid., 298-312. Also see, Louth, 1991, *The Wilderness of God*, 43-61.
[64] Lynn Ross-Bryant, 1990, The Land in American Religious Experience, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 58:355.
[65] George Huntston Williams, 1959, The Wilderness and Paradise in the History of the Church, *Church History*, 28: 3-24.

1. Introduction

Antonio R Gualtieri demonstrates the complexity of human-landscape interactions in his study of mountains. He begins his study with a survey of the religious significance of mountains for European mountaineers. This religious meaning arises partially out of the mountaineer's experiences of vulnerability and smallness in the face of the majesty and power of the mountains. Gualtieri likens this to an experience of the numinous that Rudolf Otto describes in terms of the *Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans*.[66] The next step in Gualtieri's study is to examine an explicit religious example to see how mountains impact on faith. However, in extending his study to survey the religious imagination in Tibetan Buddhism, Gualtieri finds that a simple casual link between the grandeur of mountains and an overpowering experience of the numinous is complicated by the socio-cultural and historical factors that have contributed to the development of Tibetan Buddhism.[67] A similar observation has been made by Tony Swain with respect to the Australian landscapes and Aboriginal dreaming where the 'secret is not how to feel for the land, but how to know its eternal mysteries'.[68] That is, in this situation, the spiritual significance of landscape is taught.[69]

The use of elements drawn from real and traditional landscapes can be observed in the stories that are told in pastoral care. In this way, people contextualise their encounter with God. However, the perception of landscape and its images are influenced by socio-cultural and historical factors. Nevertheless, the physical landscape can provide us with images to describe God and our relationship with God. In these uses, physical landscape is essentially a secondary element and is not used, in itself, as a source for discerning spiritual life. This last point brings us to the question of the use of landscape as a metaphor for spiritual life.

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[66] Antonio R Gualtieri, 1983, Landscape, Consciousness, and Culture, *Religious Studies*, 19: 168-169.
[67] Ibid., 174.
[68] Tony Swain, Dreaming, Whites and the Australian Landscape: Some Popular Misconceptions, 1989, *The Journal of Religious History*, 15(3): 349.
[69] For a further discussion of the interrelationship between outer spaces and inner conceptions, see David MacLagan, 1993, Inner and Outer Space: Mapping the Psyche, in *Mapping Invisible Worlds*, ed. Gavin D Flood, Cosmos, Vol. 9, 151-158, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

1.4 Physical Landscape as a Metaphor for Inner Landscape

In spiritual direction, time and space are set aside to allow the unfolding of an individual's story with reference to the movements of God in his or her life. Stories encapsulate a person's perception of their experience, as well as mediate meaning.[70] At times, in order to convey some aspect of his or her experience, a person will use metaphorical language as a vehicle for expression.

The word 'metaphor' is derived from *meta* meaning 'trans' and *pherein* 'to carry' and literally means 'transfer'.[71] In a working definition, Janet Martin Soskice defines metaphor as a 'figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another'.[72] For example, in the metaphor 'Man is a wolf', Soskice observes:

> In the statement "Man is a wolf" the principal subject, man (or men), is illumined by being seen in terms of the subsidiary subject, wolf (or wolves): "The wolf-metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others – in short, *organizes* our view of man".[73]

Thus, a metaphor provides a particular perspective through which another object, event or situation can be seen.

With the juxtaposition of different figures, something new can emerge. I A Richards describes this as an 'interplay of the interpretative possibilities' that arises out of the interaction between an underlying subject and the source used to describe it.[74] For example, if a camel is described as a 'ship of the desert', the model of a ship gives rise to a variety of images such as rolling waves, ports of call, cargo and immense spaces.[75] Here, the source of the metaphor is the ship and associations linked with ships are transferred to the subject of the metaphor, that is, the camel. In the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul', spiritual life forms the underlying

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[70] Blair Robertson, 1990, Storytelling in Pastoral Counseling: A Narrative Pastoral Theology, *Pastoral Psychology*, 39(1): 37-38; Robert L Randall, Reminiscing in the Elderly: Pastoral Care of Self-Narratives, 1986, *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 40(3): 210-212.
[71] Janet Martin Soskice, 1985, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 1.
[72] Ibid., 15; Janet Martin Soskice, 1981, Metaphor amongst Tropes, *Religious Studies* 17: 55.
[73] Janet Martin Soskice, 1985, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 40 [Italics in original].
[74] Ibid., 44.
[75] Ibid., 15.

subject. Landscape provides the source, or descriptive means used to portray spiritual life. Here, two things – spiritual life and landscape – interact with each other.

The metaphors that arise in pastoral care can occur spontaneously or be revealed gradually over time. In whatever manner they originate, they are important carriers of meaning, frequently on many different levels. They implicitly or explicitly suggest conceptions about the nature of God or spiritual life and perceptions about relationships with God and others.[76] Multiple metaphors can be present in the telling of a story highlighting the complexity, paradox or ambiguity that is frequently present. Thus, God could be called Father as well as a strong rock and the people of God warriors as well as pilgrims.[77] Each of these metaphors carries a specific network of associations that will vary from person to person.[78] At any given time, one metaphor may take precedence in a story or in its interpretation. Within the pastoral listening situation, metaphorical language holds and mediates the experience that is narrated as well as provides a means by which this experience can be structured and interpreted. Thus, metaphorical constructs are important for both the person telling his or her story and for the person who is listening.

As well as the concept of metaphor, the idea of a model is also important. Metaphor and model are often used synonymously. Max Black refers to a metaphor as 'the tip of a submerged model' and a model as 'a sustained and systematic

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[76] Sallie McFague, 1982, *Metaphorical Theology*, 107.
[77] Ibid., 20.
[78] For example, for a person who is terrified of water, the metaphor of God as an ocean may evoke images of terror and death whereas for a person who enjoys and is at home in water, such a metaphor may be associated with freedom of movement, playfulness and support.

metaphor'.[79] The source of a metaphor brings to mind a number of associations and therefore, it acts as a model for the subject of the metaphor. Thus, one thing, object, or state of affairs is described in terms of another.[80] For example, in the metaphor, 'the ship in the desert', the model of a ship introduces numerous ideas linked with the sea and sea trade such as the motion of waves and cargo. The networks of these associations are applied to the camel, which is the subject of the metaphor.

Norman Blaikie describes five types of models – representational, analogic, mathematical, theoretical and imaginary.[81] Of these, models based on metaphors best fit his description of the analogic model:

> In *analogue* models, other objects or systems are used to represent the object or phenomenon under investigation; they share, more abstractly, the same structure or pattern of relationships as the original...[82]

In an analogue model, it is the 'the web of relationships' that are significant. Here, one system of relationships is used to characterise another subject.[83] In this thesis, landscape provides the model for the metaphor the 'landscape of the soul'. Thus, 'the web of relationships' linked with landscape can be used to describe spiritual life. Therefore, spiritual life might be viewed through such associations as maps, elements of landscape such as geology or geomorphology or emergent landscape features such as matrices and corridors. I will develop these associations in Chapter 2.

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[79]Max Black, 1979, More about Metaphor, in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Max Black, *Models and Metaphors*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 236.

Ian Barbour follows Black by saying that models are like metaphors but are used in a sustained and systematic fashion (Ian G Barbour, 1974, *Myths, Models and Paradigms: The Nature of Scientific and Religious*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 16). Sallie McFague speaks about a model as a dominant metaphor, that is 'a metaphor with staying power'. She sees the model on a language continuum that stretches between primary images and secondary concepts. The model is a 'mixed type' (Sallie McFague, 1982, *Metaphorical Theology*, 23). Similarly, Vincent Brümmer follows Black in defining conceptual models as 'sustained and systematic metaphors' (Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love*, 10). For Paul Ricoeur, both the metaphor and the model are agents of redescription. He defines a model as 'a heuristic instrument that seeks, by means of fiction, to break down an inadequate interpretation and to lay the way for a new, more adequate interpretation' (Paul Ricoeur, 1977, *The Rule of Metaphor*, Trans. Robert Czerny, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 240).

[80] Janet Martin Soskice, 1985, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 50.

[81] Norman Blaikie, 1993, *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 171-175.

[82] Ibid., 171.

[83] Max Black, 1962, *Models and Metaphors*, 222; Paul Ricoeur, 1997, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 240.

Functionally, a metaphor is concerned with improving the understanding of its subject. When sets of associations connected with a model are applied to another entity or condition, then the model is being extended metaphorically. According to Janet Soskice 'it is the capacity of the lively metaphor to suggest models that enable us to "go on"...'.[84] The potential of a metaphoric model is seen in this creative power to 'go on' representing the subject.

Models, like metaphors, are formed within a specific historical tradition or horizon. For example, this is illustrated by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Here, Kuhn observes that at any one time, the scientific community holds a particular worldview dominated by certain conceptual, methodological and metaphysical assumptions. A paradigm shift occurs when this worldview is replaced by an alternative set of assumptions.[85] In a model, therefore, the questions asked, the observations made and the language used all depend upon a particular horizon. Although models, like metaphors, may act as a filter by screening out certain features, they also provide an alternative framework for observation or as Black says, become 'speculative instruments' for extending the potential of exploration.[86]

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[84] Janet Martin Soskice, 1985, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 51, 95.

[85] Thomas Kuhn, 1962, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 92.

[86] Max Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 236-237. In conjunction with the metaphor, Black writes:

> A memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other; the implications, suggestions, and supporting values entwined with the literal use of the metaphorical expression enable us to see a new subject matter in a new way. The extended meanings that result, the relations between initially disparate realms created, can neither be antecedently predicted not subsequently paraphrased in prose. We can comment *upon* the metaphor, but the metaphor itself neither needs nor invites explanation and paraphrase. Metaphorical thought is a distinctive mode of achieving insight, not to be construed as an ornamental substitute for plain thought . (Max Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 236-237.)

What may be said about the metaphor, Black argues may be applied to the model. In speaking about scientific models, he notes that if the model is applied after an abstract formulation has already been made then the model is more a convenience for exposition. However, he argues that models are 'not disreputable understudies for mathematical formulas' (236). In models, metaphors introduce 'alternative networks' which W V Quine describes as 'vital ... at the growing edges of science and philosophy' (quoted by Janet Martin Soskice, 1985, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 101). Also see Ian Barbour, 1974, *Myths, Models and Paradigms*, 33.

As we have seen, elements of landscape can be used to describe spiritual life. Given that metaphors can extend our understanding, I propose that we move beyond this use of landscape images to an exploration of landscape as a metaphor for describing spiritual life. We have models of spiritual life based on the metaphor of a pilgrim journeying through an inner landscape but we do not have a model of spiritual life as landscape. However, before proceeding to the development of a model based on the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul', I will look briefly at the model of pilgrimage and will draw attention to two areas in which problems may arise in praxis.

1.5 The Pilgrim or Journey Metaphor in Spiritual Direction

A common motif in spiritual direction is that of a pilgrimage through an inner landscape. Margaret Miles suggests that the earliest use of the pilgrimage motif occurs in *The City of God*, by Augustine. The person whose love is orientated towards God is a citizen of the City of God and:

> As long as he is in this mortal body, is a pilgrim in this mortal body, is a pilgrim in a foreign land, away from God; therefore he walks by faith and not by sight....While this heavenly City is on pilgrimage in this world, she calls out citizens from all nations and so collects a society of aliens, speaking all languages. [87]

Augustine's metaphorical use of pilgrimage reflects a practice of pilgrimage that grew during the early centuries of Christianity. The sites associated with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ became a focus for pilgrimages.[88] Since it was believed that the process of salvation was mirrored in the outward journey, landscape features or landmarks were only important as far as they were directly related to scripture or salvation.[89] By the late Middle Ages, pilgrimages had become part of

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[87] Augustine quoted by Margaret Miles, 1989, Pilgrimage as Metaphor in a Nuclear Age, *Theology Today*, 45: 168.

[88] Jaime R Vidal, 1996, Pilgrimage in the Christian Tradition, in *Pilgrimage*, eds. Virgil Elizondo and Sean Freyne, London: Orbis Books, 39-40.

[89] This is another point that illustrates how our perception of landscape is influenced by the beliefs that we hold. (Blake Leyerle, 1996, Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 64: 119-143.)

popular culture with numerous shrines dedicated to miracle-working saints. However, some abuses associated with pilgrimages, such as indulgences, came to overshadow the penitential and prayerful purpose of pilgrimages and in reaction, reformers began to advocate the imaginative, inner journey.[90]

Allegorical pilgrimages provided an alternative to their physical counterparts. One of the earliest examples of this form of writing was by the fourteenth century Cistercian, Guillaume de Deguileville. In *Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine*, he describes a dream of a pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem with allegorical figures such as Dame Grace and symbolic geographical features such as the 'sea of worldliness'.[91] In another early example, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, William Langland describes the road to truth passing through an allegorical country with landscape features such as 'the brook of Be-buxom-of-speech' and 'the ford called Honour-your-fathers.'[92] With the development of allegorical pilgrimages during the Middle Ages, landscape provided a language to describe an 'inner human landscape' that was emerging concomitant with the development of a notion of 'self'.[93]

Thomas Merton claims that Christian spiritual life is a 'perilous exploration...through deserts and paradises for which no maps exist'.[94] Nevertheless, maps are proffered in such forms as spiritual treatises and guides to Christian life.[95] In allegorical pilgrimages, the 'pilgrim' frequently traverses a landscape whose features, natural or man-made, describe a perceived aspect of spiritual life. For example, if we turn to the introduction of *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity*, C S Lewis describes the dominant images of his allegory in terms of landscape. '[The] barren, aching rocks of its "North"' represent 'men of

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[90] Jonathan Sumption, 1975, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Religion*, London: Faber & Faber, 289-302; Margaret R Miles, 1988, *The Image and Practice of Holiness*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 46-48.
[91] Ibid., 300.
[92] Ibid., 300.
[93] Philip Sheldrake, 1991, *Spirituality and History*, 43.
[94] Thomas Merton, 1977, *The Monastic Journey*, London: Sheldon Press, x.
[95] See Margaret R Miles for a critique of several classical manuals of devotion including *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Margaret R Miles, 1988, *The Image and Practice of Holiness*, London: SCM Press Ltd).

rigid systems' and the 'foetid swamps of its "South"' indicate those who are drawn towards different forms of 'intoxication'.[96] John, the central character, is awakened to spiritual realities by a vision of an island in the sea. This island becomes the object of his life's desire and initiates his pilgrimage. Different types of landscape parallel aspects in life. Thus, the aesthetic experience is depicted as a '...city, very old, and full of spires and turrets, all covered with ivy, where it lay in a little grassy valley, built on both sides of a lazy, winding river'.[97] In contrast, the city of Claptrap, the home of Mr. Enlightenment is 'a huge collection of corrugated iron huts'.[98] As well as the depiction of human landscapes, Lewis also employs natural geomorphological features. For example, sin is a great canyon.[99]

Pilgrimages, whether actual or imaginative, are journeys through time and space. Such journeys have a beginning, middle and end. In the Christian use of the pilgrimage motif, the people of God are travelling towards the fullness of time. Thus, a metaphorical model of pilgrimage is functionally eschatological. For example, in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian seeks salvation in the Celestial City:

> You are going now, said they, to the paradise of God, wherein you shall see the tree of life, and eat of the never-fading fruits thereof....In that place you must wear crowns of gold, and enjoy the perpetual sight and vision of the Holy One, for "there you shall see Him as He is."..... There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing, and your ears with hearing, the pleasant voice of the Mighty One.
>
> ...and behold, the City shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal.
>
> There were also of them that had wings, and they answered on another without intermission, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord."[100]

This description of the end of the pilgrim's journey is based on the vision of John recorded in Revelation. Although the aim of the Bunyan's pilgrim is straightforward,

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[96] C. S. Lewis, 1933, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, London: Fount, 16-17.
[97] Ibid., 56.
[98] Ibid., 50.
[99] Ibid., 98ff.
[100] John Bunyan, [no date], *The Pilgrim's Progress*, London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd., 177-178, 180, 181.

the journey, itself, is filled with diversions that are described in terms of a precise geography.

In Lewis' *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the journey is bi-directional with the pilgrim, John searching for the island in the sea and, at the same time, fleeing from the Eastern mountains, the abode of the dreaded Landlord. On his return journey, after his conversion, the landscape is transformed and John sees it as it truly is. In both *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Pilgrim's Regress*, landscape is a secondary feature: primary is the eschatological vision, the goal of the journey and Christian life is seen as a pilgrimage or journey to this goal.[101]

The concept of Christian mystical life as a three-fold way is derived from Origen, a third century Christian writer. He appropriated motifs from Platonic philosophy and reinterpreted them in the light of God's redeeming power. Thus, the Platonic division of spiritual life – *ethike*, *physike*, and *enoptike* – was correlated with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, where Proverbs is associated with the realisation of the virtues, Ecclesiastes with the attainment of a natural contemplation, and the Song of Songs with the contemplation or vision of God.[102] Through these, Origen sought to articulate the inter-relationship between God and the soul.[103] These stages through which the soul metaphorically ascends to God developed into the three-fold way delineating mystical life – purification, illumination and union.[104]

Although Origen used the metaphor of ascent, today, in some books on Christian spiritual life, the three-fold way is incorporated into the image of a journey

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[101] Margaret R Miles, 1988, *The Image and Practice of Holiness*, 48; Paul J Philibert, 1996, Pigrimage to Wholeness: An Image of Christian Life, in *Pilgrimage*, eds. Virgil Elizondo and Sean Freyne, London: SCM Press, 79-91.
[102] Andrew Louth, 1981, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 54-59.
[103] Ibid., 54.
[104] Ibid., 59; Diogenes Allen, 1997, *Spiritual Theology*, Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 10-14.

or pilgrimage leading to union with God.[105] The first stage, purification, is depicted as the way of the beginner and involves the reordering of life – the uprooting of the vices through asceticism and the planting of the theological virtues through practice.[106] This first stage coexists with the later stages of illumination and union. In the second stage, the way of illumination, the person is proficient in spiritual living and continues to grow in virtue. Although, there may be 'many secret touches' of the Divine, union with God is not permanent.[107] In the final stage, the way of the perfect, a person's life is totally and habitually conformed to the will of God through a union of love.[108]

The progression of human life from birth through childhood and maturity to old age and death also lends itself the journey motif. Thus, in addition to the traditional three-fold way, contemporary writers such as James Fowler and Daniel Helminiak draw upon insights and models from psychology to delineate schemes in

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[105] In *Spiritual Passages*, with the aid of contemporary psychological insights, Benedict Groeschel, describes Christian spiritual development using the traditional division into the purgation, the illuminative way, and the unitive way. Similarly, William Johnston also draws upon the three-fold way in describing spiritual growth and the life of prayer. Evelyn Underhill elaborates on the three-fold way adding conversion (awakening) and the dark night (the purification of the spirit) as additional stages. In *Spiritual Theology*, Jordan Aumann employs the three-fold distinction with respect to Christian prayer. (Benedict J Groeschel, 1992, *Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development*, New York: Crossroad, see chapters 6, 7, 8; William Johnston, 1995, *Mystical Theology: The Science of Love*, London: Harper Collins Publishers, see Part III, The Mystical Journey Today; Evelyn Underhill, 1911, *Mysticism*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, see chapters 2, 3, 4, 9, 10; Jordan Aumann, 1980, *Spiritual Theology*, London: Sheed and Ward, see chapters 7, 8, 12.)

[106] Evelyn Underhill, 1911, *Mysticism*, see chapters 2, 3, 4, 9, 10; Jordan Aumann, 1980, *Spiritual Theology*, see chapters 7, 8, 12.

[107] Julian of Norwich, 1966, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Clifton Wolters, London: Penguin Books, (Chapter 43), 129.

[108] John of the Cross suggests that in this stage, the 'soul thereby becomes divine, becomes God through participation, insofar as is possible in this life' (John of the Cross, 1991, The Spiritual Canticle, in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, Washington, D.C.:ICS Publications, Stanza 22, Paragraph 3).

faith development and in psycho-spiritual growth, respectively.[109] Whether spiritual life is described in terms of the threefold way or as psycho-spiritual stages, the validity of analysing human life as a linear succession of stages is assumed.

The metaphor of Christian life as a journey or pilgrimage has many associated images. In the both *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the pilgrim is travelling towards the Kingdom of God. If the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land is taken as an example, the pilgrimage can be seen as one of learning and of hope.[110]

However, there are potential dangers in the pilgrimage motif. Although a pilgrimage is usually undertaken in the company of other people, it can become focused on an individual's own salvation.[111] For example, Margaret Miles points out that if the Kingdom of God becomes the dominant vision, it is possible to devalue the physical world as well as other people.[112] Thus, it would be useful to have a model of

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[109] The developmental processes associated with human life from birth and childhood to maturity and old age provide a model for the conceptualisation of human life whether in physical or spiritual terms. In the twentieth century, the work of developmental psychologists such as Erik Erikson (epigenetic development), Jean Piaget (cognitive development), Lawrence Kohlberg (moral development) and Jane Loevinger (ego development) have influenced theorists exploring spiritual life and mapping its stages. For example, the theory of faith development by James Fowler builds on the work of Erikson, Piaget and Kohlberg. Similarly, the research of Piaget, Kohlberg and Loevinger underlies the five-stage theory of spiritual development proposed by Daniel Helminiak. See: James W Fowler, 1981, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco: Harper & Row; James W Fowler, 1984, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers; James W Fowler, 1987, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press; James W Fowler, 1991, The Vocation of Faith Development Theory in *Stages of Faith and Religious Development: Implications for Church, Education and Society*, ed. James W Fowler, Karl Ernst Nipkow and Friedrich Schweitzer, 19-36, London: SCM Press; and Daniel A Helminiak, 1987, *Spiritual Development: An Interdisciplinary Study*, Chicago: Loyola University Press.

[110] José Beozzo uses the model of the Israelites to describe the movements of refugees and poor immigrants as pilgrimages of hope that challenge us offer hospitality and help (José Oscar Beozzo, 1996, The Immigrant Poor: On Pilgrimage to a More Human Existence, in *Pilgrimage*, eds. Virgil Elizondo and Sean Freyne, London: SCM Press, 74-75.

[111] Margaret Miles, 1989, Pilgrimage as a Metaphor in a Nuclear Age, *Theology Today*, 45: 177; Iris M Yob, 1989, The Pragmatist and Pilgrimage: Revitalizing an Old Metaphor for Religious Education, *Religious Education* 84: 521. Diogenes Allen observes that for George Herbert the Church is central to the pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God whereas for Bunyan's the pilgrim, the journey is individualistic. (Diogenes Allen, 1990, The Christian Pilgrimage in George Herbert's *The Temple*, in *Modern Christian Spirituality*, ed. Bradley C Hanson, AAR Studies in Religion 62, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 68.)

[112] Margaret Miles, 1989, Pilgrimage as a Metaphor in a Nuclear Age, 171.

spiritual life that focuses upon the encounter with God in the present moment.

In addition, the model of pilgrimage is susceptible to another problem. The goal of the journey may become an end in itself. If the goal of spiritual life is perceived as union with God and this union is defined as a particular kind of altered state of consciousness, then it is conceivable that the focus of the journey can be displaced from God to attaining this experience. Similarly, Ruth Burrows observes that if particular subjective experiences are linked with stages of prayer, it is possible for a person to become preoccupied with taking his or her spiritual temperature.[113] When union with God is limited to a particular state of consciousness or to a stage of prayer a question is raised about the validity and quality of spiritual life for those who do not experience these experiences or states and a class system can be created in Christian life. Moreover, if union with God is linked to experiences and these experiences are considered as evidence of the mystical, then we are faced with the problem of understanding the different interpretations that have become associated with the word mysticism and its cognates. How we address this problem will influence our conception of the nature of Christian life.

1.5.1 Mysticism and the Goal of the Pilgrim

Mysticism is a word imbued with a variety of meanings.[114] For example, in *Western Mysticism*, Dom Cuthbert Butler writes that 'there is probably no more misused word in these our days than "mysticism"'.[115] He continues with a description of some of the phenomena that have been associated with mysticism:

> It has come to be applied to many things of many kinds: ... to spiritualism and clairvoyance: to demonology and witchcraft: to occultism and magic: ... to other-worldliness, or even mere dreaminess and impracticality in the affairs of life; to poetry and painting and music of which the motif is unobvious and vague. It has been identified with the attitude of the religious mind that cares not for dogma or doctrine, for church or sacraments: it has been identified also with a certain outlook on the world – a seeing God in nature ... the meaning of

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[113] Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, ix.
[114] See Harvey Egan for a discussion of different approaches to the mysticism. (1982, *What Are They Saying About Mysticism?*, New York: Paulist Press.)
[115] Dom Cuthbert Butler, 1922, *Western Mysticism*, London: Constable & Company Ltd., 2.

> the term has been watered down; it has been said that the love of God is mysticism; or that mysticism is only the Christian life lived on a high level...[116]

Although Dom Cuthbert made these observations in the early 1920's, the connection of mysticism to numinous experiences, altered states of consciousness, Gnostic practices and the para-psychological is still evident.[117] Throughout the twentieth century, debates about mysticism can be found in such diverse disciplines as psychology, philosophy and comparative religion. Questions have concerned various issues. For instance: Is mysticism an experience or a way of life? Is it for an elite or for all? Are there many types of mysticism or a common core to be found in all world religions? What are its characteristics? How are experiences deemed 'mystical' produced? The word 'mysticism' continues to be open to multiple interpretations.

If we think of mysticism in terms of a peak religious experience, then for Christians, it is to be clothed 'in Christ' (Gal 3.27), that is, to be united with God in Christ (John 17.20-21). The peak religious experience for the early Christians was martyrdom in imitation of Christ's martyrdom.[118] The protomartyr, Stephen, set an example. As he was stoned, Stephen was 'filled with the Holy Spirit, ... gazed into heaven and saw the gory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God' (Acts 7:55). Visions, ecstasies and the power of intercessory prayer were recorded in association with the deaths of early Christian martyrs.[119] Such phenomena, although

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[116] Dom Cuthbert Butler, 1922, *Western Mysticism*, 2.

[117] For New Age ideas related to mysticism, see Michael Perry, 1992, *Gods Within*; for the relationship between mysticism and cosmic consciousness, see Robert M May, 1991, *Cosmic Consciousness Revisited*, Rockport, Mass: Element, 291-315; for sacramental, contemplative and imagine based types of mysticism, see Morton Kesley, 1981, *Transcend: A Guide to the Perennial Spiritual Quest*, Rockport, Mass: Element, 151-160.

[118] Andrew Louth, 1991, Mysticism, in *Early Christianity*: *Origins and Evolution to AD 600*, ed. Ian Hazlett, London: SPCK, 208. The voluntary nature of a martyr's death in imitation of Christ going willingly to his death is portrayed in the *Martyrdom of Pionius*. Pionius, a bishop of Smyrna (AD 250), is reported to have said, 'What these people [the Jews] forget is that this 'criminal' [Christ] departed from life at his own choice. Thus, in obedience to my Teacher I choose to die'. (Pionius quoted by Arthur J. Droge, 1995, The Crown of Immortality: Toward a Redescription of Christian Martyrdom, in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, ed. John J Collins and Michael Fishbane, Albany, N.Y.:State of University of New York Press, 162.

[119] Andrew Louth, 1991, Mysticism, in *Early Christianity,* 209.

secondary, became linked with union with Christ whether in the 'red' martyrdom of blood or, later, in the 'white' martyrdom of sacrificial prayer and service.[120]

From the preceding examples, it can been seen that once we connect the goal of Christian life, union with God, with altered states of consciousness and place these under a general rubric of mysticism, we encounter a range of interpretations. Thus, we find mysticism linked with such things as the experience of God in nature (Butler) or visions and ecstasies (the early martyrs). If mysticism is in some way taken to be indicative of our union with God, then our interpretation is important because it may influence our conception of the type of relationship that may occur between God and humankind as well as our personal perceptions of such a relationship. From this perspective, the goal of the spiritual pilgrim and our understanding of mysticism are interrelated and will have ramifications for pastoral care. For example, in spiritual direction, a simple scenario might be constructed as follows. Mysticism could be understood as the union of God's will and human will in a transforming love. However, both the spiritual director and the directee believe that such a relationship is for an elite group of professional religious who spend long hours in prayer.[121] If the storyteller is a single, working mother, such moments of transforming union and the growth in a transcendence of love might be over-looked or misidentified because they are not a part of the woman's or her listener's concept of mysticism. Alternatively, mysticism could be considered as an altered state of consciousness that is timeless, spaceless and perceptionless. A person could induce such a state and become subtly addicted to repetitions of this 'mystical' experience.[122] In spiritual direction, where both the director and the directee believe that mysticism is an altered state of consciousness, there could be confusion in interpreting these experiences if they are seen in isolation from the person's whole life. Thus, how mysticism is conceived is important in spiritual direction because it touches the

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[120] Andrew Louth, 1991, Mysticism, in *Early Christianity,* 216.
[121] In the survey that I conducted, some spiritual directors specifically limited mysticism to the saints. They did not consider that it was possible either for themselves or for the people for whom they acted as 'soul friends'. (See Chapter 5 for details and results of the survey.)
[122] Edward Mitchell Podvoll, 1979, Psychosis and the Mystic Path, *Psychoanalytic Review* 66(4): 583-584.

fundamentals of Christian living – the revelation of God in daily life, the apprehension of this revelation by the individual or community and growth, the 'putting on [of] Christ' (Gal. 3. 27) manifested through the fruits of the Spirit.

With the greater exposure to different Christian traditions as well as a wide range of other ideas and philosophies, there is an increase in the likelihood of a disparity between individuals in their understanding and perception of Christian life and particularly, the place of mysticism within this life. Union with God can be delineated as a particular altered state of consciousness; thus, excluding some people who do not have these types of experiences as well as including those who do have these types of experiences but whose experiences are not related to God.

In the model of the pilgrim, the journey is towards God. At the same time, God is a companion on the journey, thus imbuing the journey with significance. Nevertheless, as it has already been observed, a person may become focused on attaining particular altered states that have become associated with mysticism. When this happens, it is possible to lose sight of God both as companion and goal. Therefore, under these circumstances, an alternative model that enables a person to re-focus upon God in the present moment may be beneficial. I postulate that a model of spiritual life based on the metaphor of landscape may provide such a complementary model to pilgrimage.

Landscape is a recurring motif in the narratives of individuals telling their stories. It can provide images with which to describe God and spiritual life and it can influence a person's theological outlook. With the metaphor the 'landscape of the soul' another aspect of landscape is suggested, one which has not been systematically developed in pastoral care. Instead of using landscape as the backdrop against which a pilgrim travels toward a goal, I suggest looking at spiritual life as a landscape. In the following section, I will outline where such an exploration will lead and why the thesis takes this particular form of development.

1.6 The Shape of the Thesis

The research presented in this thesis is grounded in the pastoral cycle. Briefly, the pastoral cycle describes a movement from practice to theory and back to

practice.[123] It is 'situation-based'.[124] The point of departure is experience in a particular context whether this is the church, the school, the hospital, the factory or the street. Next, a move into a theoretical world of reflection occurs. Here, there is a dialogue between experience and theory. In addition to prayer, liturgy and meditation upon scripture, insights and methods are drawn from biblical scholars, church historians and systematic theologians. Pastoral theology is inter-disciplinary and therefore, social sciences such as sociology, psychology and anthropology can also contribute to theoretical reflection. Alastair V Campbell describes the dialogue between practice and theological reflection as 'an exercise in creative imagination, the interplay of idea and action, with all the ambiguity and inconclusiveness which this implies.'[125] The insights that emerge out of the reflective process are taken back to the practical situation and the cycle begins again.

Although the basic movement in the pastoral cycle is from praxis to reflection and back to praxis, this pattern may be sub-divided into various stages. For example, Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, in *Practical Theology in Action*, describe the cycle as moving through experience, exploration, reflection and action.[126] First, there is an initiating experience. Next comes the exploration of the problem situation. This is comprised of two processes: there is the practical gathering of information to create the richest possible picture of the situation which is followed by a theoretical analysis. Then, a return is made to the practical situation with a programme for action. In *Helping the Helpers*, John Foskett and David Lyall present an alternative scheme of the cycle based on an elaboration of a learning model.[127] In their model, the first stage, experience, delineates what has occurred and needs to be addressed. This is followed by a period of reflection where the actions and feelings of an experience are viewed. The third stage is the discernment of meaning in the

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[123] Don S Browning, 1991, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 9. Similarly, Alastair V Campbell writes that practical theology consists of the juxtaposition of concrete situations with theological reflection. (Alastair V Campbell, 1990, The Nature of Practical Theology, in *Theology and Practice*, ed. Duncan B Forrester, London: Epworth Press, 18.)
[124] Alastair V Campbell, 1990, The Nature of Practical Theology, 18.
[125] Ibid., 18.
[126] Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, 1996, *Practical Theology in Action*, London: SPCK, 77-78.
[127] John Foskett and David Lyall, 1990, *Helping the Helpers*, London: SPCK, 14-31.

experience. Finally, alternatives are postulated that may be taken back into the practical situation. However, in both of these models of the pastoral cycle, the fundamental movement is from praxis to reflection and back to praxis.

The shape of this thesis is patterned on the pastoral cycle. Thus, it is divided into three parts. Part One, consisting of Chapter 1, represents the initial practical situation. Part Two, consisting of Chapters 2 and 3, represents the reflective phase of the cycle. Part Three, consisting of Chapters 4 and 5, represents the return to praxis. I will elaborate each of these phases of the cycle with reference to the model of the 'landscape of the soul'.

1.6.1 The Initial Practical Situation

The practical situation that provides the point of departure for this thesis is the practice of spiritual direction.

Spiritual Direction

The tradition of spiritual direction stretches back to at least the desert fathers/mothers in the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ.[128] The purpose of direction is to discern the movements of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual. Thus, in this thesis, it is assumed that God communicates with humankind and that this communication can be experienced. In spiritual direction, one person acts as a companion and guide to another, that is, as a 'soul-friend'.[129] As a guide, the spiritual director facilitates the process of discernment, that is, the attentive listening to God, though providing an alternative perspective, one that may challenge as well as

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[128] Janet Ruffing proposes six successive models of spiritual direction – the desert *abbas/ammas*, the Benedictine, the late medieval non-monastic, the Ignatian, the director of conscience and the contemporary companion model. (Janet Ruffing, 1989, *Uncovering Stories of Faith: Spiritual Direction and Narrative*, New York: Paulist Press, 2-17.)

[129] Although in the recent past, spiritual directors tended to be ordained ministers or professional religious, lay people are increasing participating in this ministry. In *Soul Friend*, Kenneth Leech gives a comprehensive introduction to the tradition of spiritual direction in Christianity. (Kenneth Leech, 1992, *Soul Friend*, San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, See Chapters 2 and 3; 34-89, 90-136.)

encourage a person. The value of spiritual direction is captured in the Celtic maxim that 'a person without a soul-friend is a body without a head'.[130]

In 1950, Thomas Merton, the Trappist contemplative, wrote that 'strictly speaking, spiritual direction is not necessary for the ordinary Christian'.[131] For him, spiritual direction was for people in particular circumstances such as preparation for marriage or for those who had 'a special work to do for the Church'.[132] Otherwise, Merton assumed that what was said in the confessional would be sufficient. Traditionally, in Roman Catholic and Anglican communities, spiritual directors, or 'soul-friends', tended to be limited to a small number of ordained ministers or professional religious.[133] Today, in response to the interest of 'ordinary' Christians in spiritual direction, training courses have been developed to enable both ordained and non-ordained people to listen effectively to the stories of others.[134] Hence, the desire to explore the spiritual dimension in life brings together, as 'soul-friends', people from various backgrounds and with different religious orientations.

The increased attention to spiritual life reflects several trends in Western society including, since the end of the nineteenth century, the interchange between the eastern world and the West.[135] Innumerable people have made pilgrimages to the eastern world, particularly India, seeking 'mystical' experiences and esoteric knowledge.[136] The emergence of a new scientific paradigm, which emphasises a holistic, interrelated conception of the world as well as the role of human subjectivity within the scientific enterprise, is another factor shaping the western understanding of

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[130] Diarmuid O'Laoghaire, 1986, Celtic Spirituality, in *The Study of Spirituality*, eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, London: SPCK, 222.
[131] Thomas Merton, 1975, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation and What is Contemplation*, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire: Anthony Clarke, 20-21.
[132] Ibid., 21.
[133] Janet Ruffing, 1989, *Uncovering Stories of Faith*, 1-17; Kenneth Leech, 1992, *Soul Friend: An Invitation to Spiritual Direction*, 34-88.
[134] For example, the Craighead Spirituality Centre in Glasgow, organises a two-year training course that explores issues in spiritual direction, introduces listening skills, examines discernment and decision making in Christian life and investigates images of God. The participants personally work with a spiritual director and under supervision, act as directors.
[135] William Johnston, 1995, *Mystical Theology*, 128-134; John Miller, 1981, Orienting the Church: Easternizing Christianity, *The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research*, 4: 182-183.
[136] Gabriel J Fackre, Going East: Neomysticism and the Christian Faith, *Christian Century*, 88: 457.

spirituality.[137] In addition to the influence of the eastern philosophies and religions, and the alternative metaphysical base in science, there has been a proliferation of 'New Age' sects reflecting the human potential movement. In his critique of the 'New Age', Michael Perry describes the Fifteenth International Festival for Mind/Body/Spirit as 'a monstrously overgrown garden of the spirit, wild rather than cultivated' because of the proliferation of different beliefs indiscriminately mixed together.[138] Such a popular fascination with the 'spiritual' is manifested by general publications on spirituality/mysticism found in specialist shops and 'Mind, Body and Spirit' sections of larger book shops. One of the consequences of this 'overgrown garden of the spirit' is that a syncretistic mix of Christian tradition, scientific thought, New Age ideas, eastern philosophies or religions and practical techniques for inducing altered states of consciousness can be brought into spiritual direction by the participants.

In the spiritual direction conversation, a person relates his or her story from the perspective of a particular world-view, that is, from within the context of a specific cultural and religious tradition. Both participants have a complex set of pre-understandings or, according to Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'prejudices' which influence the perception and interpretation of the narrative discourse.[139] Within any tradition, such shared 'prejudices' create a 'horizon' of common meaning, 'a range of vision that includes all that can be seen from a particular vantage point'.[140] In an essay entitled 'The Narrative Quality of Experience', Stephen Crites argues that experience is 'inherently narrative'.[141] He distinguishes three strands of narrative within experience – the sacred, the mundane and the temporal. The sacred is the unexpressed 'story within the Story' through which a person's 'sense of self and the world is created'. The mundane refers to the secondary form of sacred stories where

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[137] Willis Harman, 1994, Toward a 'Science of Wholeness', in *New Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*, ed. Willis Harman with Jane Clark, Sausalito, California: Institute of Noetic Sciences, 375-394.
[138] Michael Perry, 1992, *Gods Within: A Critical Guide to the New Age*, London: SPCK, 3.
[139] Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1960/1989, *Truth and Method*, 2nd Rev. Ed. Trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G Marshall, New York: Continuum, 268.
[140] Ibid., 302.
[141] Stephen Crites, 1971, The Narrative Quality of Experience, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 39(3): 291.

they are objectively embodied in the 'phenomenological *mundus*' of plot and character such as in traditional scriptures. The temporal is the personal story constructed through the interplay of sensory perception, memory and recollection.[142]

Stories are told and interpreted within a 'horizon' woven out of the underlying 'sacred' and the expressed 'mundane' strands of experience. To this common 'horizon' is added the 'temporal' or personal dimension. However, in spiritual direction today, it is possible that the 'sacred-mundane-temporal' story will reflect a syncretistic, personalised spirituality. Consequently, the common 'horizon' may be less common than it is assumed.

Moreover, within the pastoral situation, there are implicit and explicit parameters that influence the hermeneutical process and that need to be addressed for effective listening. For instance, a spiritual director may explicitly express the belief that mysticism represents a dynamic relationship with God, yet in practice act as if mysticism was an altered state of consciousness. Likewise, a person in direction may affirm the love of God for each individual and at the same time, unconsciously, exclude him or herself. In both of these examples, explicit beliefs are stated but implicit beliefs are active.

Although it may be assumed by the directee that the spiritual director is knowledgeable in prayer and the different spiritual traditions within Christendom, both persons are equally involved in the process of discernment. Various frameworks help structure spiritual direction and enable the interpretation of a person's story. For example, the spiritual director may act as a teacher. In this model, the director may challenge the presuppositions of a person and encourage the person to explore alternatives. If spiritual direction is seen within the pilgrim/journeying model, the director is a fellow pilgrim or companion with some experience of the signposts or landmarks along the way. Another pattern in spiritual

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[142] Stephen Crites, 1971, The Narrative Quality of Experience, 195-305.

direction is that of the midwife.[143] Here, the spiritual director is like a midwife aiding in a birth of new life in the Spirit. In this thesis, I suggest a model in which the director is a geographer discerning the landscape of the soul. Such a model is similar to those of the pilgrim and the midwife in that it is an imaginative construct that can be used as a framework through which the process of God's self-revelation in the life of a person can be discerned. Moreover, in so far as elements associated with a physical landscape can be metaphorically extended, the model remains dynamic and allows the interplay of ideas between landscape and spiritual life. In discerning the movements of the Holy Spirit, one or more models may be useful with different people and under different circumstances. There are many paradoxes in Christian life and hence one framework may highlight an aspect of spiritual life whilst in another this characteristic is over-shadowed.

However, there is a difference between the landscape model and those of the teacher, pilgrim or midwife. In the model of the teacher-pupil, there is a lesson to be learned. For the pilgrim, there is a goal to be reached and with the midwife, there is a birth. In each of these approaches, there is a movement towards an objective or end point – a lesson, a destination or a birth. In contrast, the landscape model is static. The spiritual director, as geographer, is an observer viewing the landscape and its processes *in situ*. Thus, I hypothesise that the landscape model acts as a complementary model to those models orientated towards achieving a particular goal. Hence, in an achievement-driven society, the landscape model may be found to be important because it focuses upon the sense of God's presence in the present moment.

From the foregoing, the starting point of this thesis has been identified as spiritual direction. In the model of pilgrimage, spiritual direction can be seen as one person acting as a companion to another on his or her spiritual journey. At the beginning of this chapter, I characterised Christian spirituality as a personal

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[143] Margaret Guenther describes spiritual direction as hospitality – of providing a space in which a person's story can unfold. In this process, the spiritual director can variously act as teacher or a midwife. (Margaret Guenther, 1992, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd.)

relationship with God that is contextual and dynamic. Such an understanding of Christian spirituality will underlie the reflective phase of the pastoral cycle.

1.6.2 The Reflective Phase of the Pastoral Cycle

The reflective phase of the pastoral cycle constitutes Part Two of this thesis. Here, I explore and construct a model based on the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul'. In describing the problem situation in praxis, I highlighted two possible limitations of the pilgrim model. With the focus on a future goal, this model can lead to a disregard or repudiation of human life in the present world. In addition, the focus upon a goal can lead to particular subjective experiences pre-empting God. Each of these situations are addressed in the reflective phase. Thus, the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is explored at two levels.

In Chapter 2, through principles drawn from geography and systems, I posit a model of spiritual life as landscape. The model that I generate at this level of investigation is a general and hypothetical elaboration of the metaphor of landscape. At this point, I will compare pilgrimage and landscape in order to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the model of the 'landscape of the soul'.

In Chapter 3, within the context of the model of landscape, I will explore some of the different interpretations that have been linked with mysticism. Thus, some of the elements and interconnections of landscape will provide the framework within which these understandings of mysticism can be situated with respect to one another. This is a more detailed and specific exploration of the model than that found in Chapter 2. However, it is here that I will address the problem of the goal in spiritual life being defined in terms of subjective states of consciousness. This discussion will lead to postulating some of the implications of the model of the 'landscape of the soul'.

1.6.3 The Return to the Practical Situation

Finally, in Part Three of the thesis, I return to the practical situation of spiritual direction. At this point in the thesis, the question that is addressed is how the theoretical model can be brought into a dialogue with praxis. The model is

examined via two complementary studies.

In spiritual direction, a story is told and interpreted. Thus, in Chapter 4, I begin the dialogue with the application of the model to a story, that of Clare of Assisi seen through her life and writings. If the model is coherent, it should provide a way of looking at Clare that is consistent with historical tradition and at the same time, allow us to see an overall unity in her life.

If the landscape model is devised as a way of addressing problems that may arise in the pilgrim model, then how relevant and applicable is it in spiritual direction? Thus, in Chapter 5, the potential usefulness of the model is assessed through a survey of contemporary spiritual directors that I conducted. If the model is applicable there may be certain circumstances in which it could enable those involved in spiritual direction to perceive spiritual life more holistically than would be possible through the lens of other models such as pilgrimage.

The model of the 'landscape of the soul' is grounded in the movements of the pastoral cycle from the practical situation to reflection and back to the practical situation. The theoretical exploration of landscape as a metaphor uses principles taken from geography and ecology. Similarly, the examination of the usefulness of the model draws upon methods that are used in the social sciences including survey techniques and qualitative statistical analysis. Hence, the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is an interdisciplinary study of Christian spirituality.

1.7 Summary of Chapter One: Introduction

In this chapter, I have identified a twofold problem that arises in spiritual direction with the use of the model of pilgrimage. In response, I have suggested that there is a need for a metaphoric model that will complement pilgrimage. Such a model would focus attention on the encounter with God in the present moment and would enable us to situate some of the different understandings of mysticism that can occur in spiritual direction.

Landscape is a pervasive element in human consciousness and hence a recurring motif in spiritual direction. Although elements drawn from landscape can be used to describe our conceptions of God and our perceptions of our relationship

with God, landscape has not been used a model for spiritual life. Hence, I propose an exploration of the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul'.

I have situated this thesis within the pastoral cycle. Therefore, it follows the movement from practice to theory and back to practice provides the structure for this thesis. The cycle begins in the practice of spiritual direction and the hypothesis that the metaphor of landscape may provide a complementary model to those that focus on a goal such as in pilgrimage. With the move to theoretical reflection, physical landscape provides the metaphorical basis for model building from the perspective of geography and ecology. In the return to the practical situation, the model is tested through an case study of Clare of Assisi and through a survey of spiritual directors and therapists.

In short, the objectives of this thesis are:

1. to explore and construct a model based on the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul' and
2. to examine the potential usefulness of such a model in spiritual direction.

PART TWO: THE PHASE OF REFLECTION IN THE PASTORAL CYCLE

2. CREATING A MODEL USING LANDSCAPE AS A METAPHOR

The pastoral cycle begins in a practical situation with the observation of a problematic situation. In this thesis, this situation has been identified as spiritual direction where the use of the pilgrimage model can lead to misunderstandings about the nature of Christian spiritual life. The cycle then moves to a phase of reflection. Here, various sources may be drawn upon to contribute to a consideration of various aspects of the situation under examination. Chapters 2 and 3 form the reflective phase of pastoral cycle in this thesis. In this chapter, the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul' will be probed at a general level relating to Christian spirituality. Then, in Chapter 3, it will be examined more specifically with respect to some different understandings associated with mysticism.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore and construct a model based upon the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul'. Images are drawn from different landscapes to describe spiritual life and landscape acts as the background for the spiritual pilgrim. However, landscape has not been systematically developed as a metaphor for spiritual life although this might be useful for two reasons. First, I hypothesise that a model of spiritual life derived from landscape will complement the model of the pilgrim in that it will draw attention to the encounter with God in the present moment. Second, I hypothesise that a landscape model will provide a framework in which some of the different interpretations of mysticism can be situated. In this chapter, my concern is specifically with the first hypothesis and in the following chapter, with the second. I suggest that through the metaphor of landscape, we will be able to glimpse some of the movements of the Spirit in human life.

Landscape can be studied from different viewpoints. I will explore the metaphor in two ways – through landscape as a system and through the characteristics of landscape. These two approaches provide the basic structure of this chapter. However, before beginning, I will look at the concept of mapping because this will provide us with an indication of some of the general characteristics that we

might expect from a model based on the metaphor of landscape. Then, I will look at landscape as a system and at some of the elements or subsystems that may be found in it. Next, I will extend the metaphor through three characteristics associated with landscape – its structure, function and change. As the model is constructed, it will become clear that these two ways of approaching landscape are interrelated and overlap. Following this metaphorical exploration of landscape, I will look at how we perceive landscape and the overall shape of the model. Finally, I will compare the pilgrim and landscape models to consider whether landscape might complement pilgrimage. Thus, the pattern of this chapter moves from landscape as a whole to landscape considered through its parts and then, back to landscape as a whole.

2.1 Mapping and the Model

In the previous chapter, I observed that a metaphor could be extended through its network of associations. Maps are connected with landscape. One of the relationships between maps and landscape can be demonstrated through a story that the aviator and writer, Saint-Exupéry, recorded. In 1926, on the eve of his first mail flight from France to Africa, Saint-Exupéry sought the counsel of Guillaumet, a more experienced pilot, who gave him a 'strange lesson in geography'.[1] What happened was that the landscape that was abstractly represented on Saint-Exupéry's maps was transformed:

> The details that we drew up from oblivion, from their inconceivable remoteness, no geographer had been concerned to explore. Because it washed the banks of great cities, the Ebro River was of interest to map-makers. But what had they to do with that brook running secretly through the water-weeds to the west of Motril, that brook nourishing a mere score or two of flowers?
>
> Little by little, under the lamp, the Spain of my map became a sort of fairyland. The crosses I marked to indicate safety zones and traps were so many buoys and beacons. I charted the farmer, the thirty sheep, the brook. And, exactly where she stood, I set a buoy to mark the shepherdess forgotten by the geographers.[2]

In those early days of aviation when the propellers of planes could suddenly stop and

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[1] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1940, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, trans. Lewis Galantière, London: William Heinemann Limited, 8.
[2] Ibid., 8, 9.

necessitate an emergency landing, knowledge of the particular features in a landscape was essential for survival. Otherwise, as Guillaumet observed, 'you think the meadow empty, and suddenly bang! there are thirty sheep in your wheels'.[3]

Saint-Exupéry's maps demonstrate a continuum from a general representation of landscape to the local and detailed depiction of a landscape. Such a continuum can be found in models that range from abstract concepts to those illustrating specific conditions and likewise, in spiritual direction, from the theoretical conjectures to the personal narrative. In the first instance, Saint-Exupéry had a commercial map that was made for general use. Here, only the most prominent landscape features such as the Ebro River were marked. The map provided a general representation of landscape. However, drawing upon the experience of Guillaumet, Saint-Exupéry annotated his map with local details so that it became a specific, albeit personal, representation of landscape. This map depicted the everyday landscape that he might encounter if forced to make an emergency landing. Thus, in this story, there is movement between two points of reference – from the abstract to the particular.

In the story of Saint-Exupéry, what is mapped and the detail that is included is determined by the purpose of the map. Hence, for Saint-Exupéry, a map that might have been suitable for a geography class would not be sufficient for a pilot having to make emergency landings. John Campbell defines a map as:

> An abstraction of reality used for analysing, storing and communicating information about the locations, attributes and interrelationships of physical and social phenomena that are distributed over the earth's surface.[4]

This definition is consistent with the definition of landscape that I have adopted in this thesis in that it takes account of both 'physical and social phenomena'.[5] Nevertheless, attention needs to be drawn to the fact that maps are a two-dimensional representation of four-dimensional time-space. Although maps are intended to represent spatial reality, the complexity of interrelationships found in a landscape are reduced and can be omitted altogether. It was some of those interrelationships such

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[3] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1940, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, 9.
[4] John Campbell, 1991, Definition 281, in *Definitions of the Word 'Map', 1649-1996*, J H Andrews, http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps/essays/andrews.htm.
[5] Ibid., Definition 281.

as the 'the farmer, the thirty sheep, [and] the brook' that Saint-Exupéry reintroduced on his map.[6] In addition, depending on the scale of map, distortion is introduced through the transformation of a spherical surface to a flat plane.

Gillian Rose demonstrates in her classes on 'Visualised Geographies', and early cartographic evidence suggests that our socio-cultural beliefs and traditions influence the landscape that we see.[7] Therefore, I would modify Campbell's definition by adding the adjective 'perceived' so that the statement becomes 'a map is an abstraction of perceived reality'. In other words, 'we make our own geography'.[8] Campbell's definition of a map draws attention to the location, attributes and interrelationships of social and physical phenomena but what these are and how they are mapped will be, to a certain degree, contingent upon worldview.

Using Campbell's definition, it can be seen that a map performs three functions: analysis, storage and communication. First, a map represents an initial distillation of information that may be used by the map-reader for further analyses. Thematic maps convey specific information such as patterns of vegetation, voting districts, or demographics. Such maps are not new. In the ancient world, the Babylonians and Egyptians created maps to delineate areas of taxation.[9] Alternatively, reference maps provide a general representation of landscape features without emphasising one particular theme or concept.

Second, maps are records in which information can be stored with varying degrees of permanency. Such information is commonly reduced to symbols that have been agreed upon by convention. For example, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the church was seen as the centre of a community. Thus, at this time, it was a convention to use drawings of churches to denote areas of settlement.[10]

Third, maps act as a form of communication. As a visual transmission of

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[6] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1940, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, 8.
[7] Gillian Rose, 1996, Teaching Visualised Geographies: Towards a Methodology for the Interpretation of Visual Materials, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 20(3): 281-294; Blake Leyerle, 1996, Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 64(1): 119-143.
[8] Blake Leyerle, 1996, Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives, 120.
[9] A G Hodgkiss, 1981, *Understanding Maps*, Folkestone, Kent: W M Dawson & Son Ltd., 19.
[10] Ibid, 45.

information, map-reading engages both physiological and psychological processes related to physical perception, i.e. sight, and psychological processes related to learning, memory and interpretative skills.[11] Thus, what a map-maker thinks is recorded may not be what the map-reader sees and interprets.

Previously, when examining metaphors, I introduced the example of the camel as a ship in the desert. Here the networks of associations linked with ships are applied to the camel. Thus, shifting and drifting sand dunes are seen as analogous to ocean waves. Similarly, maps and mapping are one of the networks of associations that can be connected with landscape and a model based on landscape becomes comparable with a map. Taking into account the foregoing definition of maps, what would we expect in the mapping of a metaphorical 'landscape of the soul'?

If the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is mapped, it is likely to be a highly abstract representation of the network of relationships found in spiritual life. As I noted with reference to landscape, our perceptions are contextual and hence what the model portrays conceivably will change according to time and place. As a map fails to reproduce the complexity of the physical and social reality and even can introduce distortions, so too, it is postulated that the model of the 'landscape of the soul' will fall short of representing the fullness of the relationship between God and humankind. Through generalisation, such a model will over-simplify the realities it depicts and hence it is open to misrepresenting spiritual life.

Campbell's concept of mapping draws attention to both physical and social phenomena. Therefore, in light of his definition, it is assumed that the model of the 'landscape of the soul' will be concerned with all elements, whether physical, socio-cultural or spiritual, that contribute to the formation of spiritual life. Analogous to physical maps, what is considered important in the model will vary according to the presuppositions of a particular time and place.

Functionally, it was seen that through mapping, information could be analysed, stored and communicated. With respect to the model of the 'landscape of the soul', this observation raises several questions. By analogy, the model of the

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[11] See J S Keates for a comprehensive discussion of the physiology and psychology of creating and interpreting maps. (J S Keates, 1982, *Understanding Maps*, London and New York: Longman.)

'landscape of the soul' should be useful for the analyses of spiritual life. If this is true, will such a model be valuable in pastoral care and more specifically, for the discernment of spirits in spiritual direction? I address this question in Chapter 5 through a survey of spiritual directors that I conducted in Edinburgh, Glasgow and London. Whether concerned with a particular theme or more generally with a range of variables, a map provides a structure in which these can be located. Again, if this is true for the 'landscape of the soul', will the model accommodate the different conceptions of mysticism that can arise in spiritual direction? I examine this question in Chapter 3. Finally, maps provide a form of communication. What ideas surface with the model of the 'landscape of the soul'? To what does such a model draw attention? These questions are explored throughout this thesis.

From the foregoing discussion, some of the limitations of the model of the 'landscape of the soul' can be postulated. The model will be highly abstract and it cannot be claimed that it is an adequate description of the reality of spiritual life that it seeks to represent. The model will be contextual, that is, like a map, it will be dependent upon the perceptions of both the map-maker and the map-user. Alfred Korzybski warns that a 'map is *not* the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a *similar structure* to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness'.[12] Therefore, it may be surmised that a model of the 'landscape of the soul' will draw attention to some characteristics or relationships in spiritual life, however, these will be contextual. Moreover, it is not the intent of the model to prescribe in detail what should happen in spiritual life. Nevertheless, taking into account these initial limitations, I hypothesise that an exploration of the metaphor of landscape will provide some insights into spiritual life and that the model of the 'landscape of the soul' could potentially be of some heuristic value in pastoral care.

2.2 The Landscape as a System

In the introduction to this chapter, I observed that landscape can be studied in different ways. In the following two sections, I will extend the metaphor of

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[12] Alfred Korzybski, 1948, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, 3rd ed. New York: Country Life Press Corporation, 58.

landscape through systems thinking. The basis for this approach is derived from the definition of landscape adopted, that a landscape is a composite of different elements or subsystems interacting to form a unique spatial entity or system. Therefore, it is assumed that a model based on landscape will be a system and reflect some of the ideas associated with thinking in systems. Hence, in this section, I will introduce some general concepts linked with systems. The following section will look more closely at the elements or subsystems that may comprise a landscape and by analogy a model of the 'landscape of the soul'.

Briefly, systems thinking provides a holistic means of viewing the world as a set of interacting systems and subsystems in contrast to the reductionistic paradigm where phenomena are broken down into constituent parts which are then, examined in isolation. Systems thinking can be defined as a way of:

> Looking at situations, topics, or problems, etc. as a complex of interacting parts which can be divided into specific systems and within these, subsystems, and if necessary into sub-subsystems, and so on. Identification of these various systems is followed by an examination of the relationships among them, including the flows of influences, materials and energy and the routes these take among and within the systems involved.[13]

The central idea is the 'system'. Typically, a system consists of a particular set of elements and their relationships. Together, these 'interacting parts' create an organisation or structure that functions as a whole.[14] A system is described in terms of its structure, those elements that are slow to change and its function, the internal and external interactions or processes that are present.

Generally, systems are characterised by two sets of features: emergence and hierarchy, and communication and control.[15] I will consider hierarchy and emergence

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[13] Open Systems Group, 1981, Introduction., In *Systems Behaviour*, 3rd Ed. ed. Open Systems Group, London: Harper and Row, Publishers with The Open University Press, 14.

[14] The Open systems group defines a system as a:

> Set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes connected or related to each other and to their environment in such a manner as to form an entirety or whole. (Open Systems Group, 1981, *Systems Behaviour*, 14.)

Peter Checkland defines a system as a 'set of elements connected together which form a whole, this showing properties which are properties of the whole, rather than properties of its component parts'. (Peter Checkland, 1981, *Systems Thinking, Systems Practice*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 3)

[15] Peter Checkland, 1981, *Systems Thinking, Systems Practice*, 75.

first. Different degrees of 'organised complexity' exist at different levels of reality.[16] In *General Systems Theory*, Von Bertalanffy observes that 'we find organization at all levels'.[17] These levels form a hierarchy with each succeeding level being more complex than its predecessor. In this thesis, I use hierarchy to indicate these different levels of complexity.

According to systems thinking, at each successive level, new properties emerge which cannot be reduced to a previous level. These properties are characteristic of that level and cannot be described using the language of former levels. For example, terms used in geology to describe minerals or the composition of rocks such as silicate, basalt or metamorphic, are superseded at the level of geomorphology where a vocabulary has been developed to describe particular landforms or regional areas such as stacks, drumlins or karst topography. Different modes of description are appropriate at different levels of complexity. Systems, which function as a whole on one level, may be subsystems at a higher level. Thus, both geology and geomorphology are structural subsystems in a landscape.

As systems increase in complexity, they become fewer and have wider functional properties. At the human and socio-cultural levels, the human observer is part of the system.[18] If as it is suggested, landscape is seen as a composite involving both human and environmental dimensions, then the geographer is part of the system that is being observed. The role of 'geographer' can be metaphorically extended to indicate the spiritual director. If this analogy is made, then just as the geographer is part of the landscape being observed, so too, the spiritual director can be perceived to be a part of the 'landscape of the soul'. In other words, the director is not simply an objective and detached observer in the process of discernment.

Communication and control is the second pair of characteristics in systems. The boundary of a system is that which separates it from the surrounding

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[16] Peter Checkland, 1981, *Systems Thinking, Systems Practice*, 78. The concept of hierarchy is much maligned in some feminist literature where there is a tendency to confuse it with political (e.g. monarchy) and power structures.

[17] Ludwig von Bertalanffy, 1968, *General Systems Theory*, London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 48.

[18] A seminal systems thinker, Kenneth Boulding first proposed a hierarchy of systems in the 1950's. See Kenneth E Boulding, 1956, General Systems Theory – The Skeleton of Science, *Management Science*, 2(3): 197-208.

environment. As such, it is arbitrarily defined according to selected criteria. Within the living organism, von Bertalanffy observed that there are systems which are open to their environment and there are those which are closed. A closed system is self-contained without any input from the environment across its boundary.[19] An open system interacts with its environment in some way usually through a flow of energy, materials or information. A landscape is an open system. Figure 2.1, found on page 97, portrays a simple open system.[20] If this system were a landscape, inputs of energy (such as solar radiation), materials (farm equipment), information (seeds) and labour (people) might be transformed into outputs of agricultural produce.

Some form of communication and control is essential in open systems. An important concept is that of feedback whereby a system is self-regulating.[21] Negative feedback reduces change and tends to help a system maintain equilibrium or homeostasis whereas positive feedback leads to an increase in instability and eventually, results in change. A common example of negative feedback is the thermostat where a signal is sent to a furnace to turn on the heat when a room drops below a set temperature. A noisy room demonstrates positive feedback. As the noise level increases so do the voices of those carrying on conversations. However, as voices become louder, there is an increase in noise level and the cycle is repeated. A system may reach a state of dynamic equilibrium through the balancing of its inputs and outputs.

Thinking in terms of systems is non-specific and is applied in diverse disciplines. It can be used to describe physical systems such as the earth's fluvial systems; biological systems like the autonomic nervous system; mechanical systems as in an engine; and communication systems such as a digital telephone network. All of these systems – physical, biological, mechanical or digital – can be studied from the perspective of a whole as well as be reduced into their constituent parts. In the following section, I will examine some of the subsystems associated with landscape.

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[19] Richard J Chorley and Barbara A Kennedy, 1971, *Physical Geography*, London: Prentice-Hall International Inc., 2; F E Kast and J E Rosenzweig, 1981, The Modern View: A Systems Approach, In *Systems Behaviour*, ed. Open Systems Group, 48; I D White, D N Mottershead and S J Harrison, 1992, *Environmental Systems*, London: Chapman & Hall, 10-11.

[20] All subsequent figures related to this chapter are placed at the end of the chapter.

[21] Ludwig von Bertalanffy, 1968, *General System Theory*, 19.

That is, I will look at some of the parts of the landscape system.

Peter Checkland proposes a systems typology consisting of five types of systems: natural, designed physical, designed abstract, human activity and transcendental.[22] This typology is represented in Figure 2.1 found on page 97. Natural systems consist of those systems belonging to the natural order such as the solar system, crystal structures and biological cells. Whether organic or inorganic, these systems are governed by certain laws and forces that would have to be changed for the system to be different from what it is. In contrast to natural systems, designed systems can be different because they depend on human creativity. Physically designed systems are concerned with artefacts that have been created for a specific purpose whereas, abstract systems refer to such things as poetry, mathematics and philosophy. The fourth system in Checkland's typology is the human activity system. Two characteristics distinguish human activity systems from natural systems. First, these systems are composed of activities that are dependent upon human choice and therefore, the system can be changed. Second, these systems involve human self-consciousness. That which is at present incomprehensible or beyond human knowledge is assumed to be fifth type of system called the transcendental.

If, as I propose, landscape is considered a composite of the human and physical systems, or Jackson's '*synthetic* space', then landscape cuts across and emerges from Checkland's five systems.[23] It is composed of natural systems such as geology, geomorphology and ecology. It may contain designed physical systems such as a network of roads, canals, or villages. Since perception of landscape is influenced by such factors as the socio-cultural, philosophical or theological presuppositions, it interacts with designed abstract systems. Human activity systems can be positively engaged with landscape through various activities such as farming, transport networks or urbanisation, or negatively through avoidance of certain areas. Finally, from a Christian perspective, if the ultimate transcendental system is conceived as God, then landscape as a part of creation interacts and is sustained by God (Col. 1.16, 17).

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[22] Peter Checkland, 1981, *Systems Thinking*, 109-121.
[23] J B Jackson, 1986, *Landscape Meanings and Values*, 68.

When an analogy is drawn between landscape and spiritual life, it could be argued that the 'landscape of the soul' involves all of the systems enumerated by Checkland. In varying degrees, human life involves physical systems such as the body, designed abstract systems such religious and philosophical beliefs, designed physical systems such as religious artefacts as well as those involved in daily life, and human activity systems such as the different institutional churches. However, it could be postulated that what distinguishes spiritual life from human life is the emergence in a person's conscious awareness of the interaction or more accurately the interrelationship between God, the transcendental, and the totality of his or her life. If a belief in Trinitarian doctrine and its associated supposition of a relational God is held to be true, I suggest that for a Christian this interaction can be described as a personal encounter.

Up to this point, I have defined landscape in terms of a composite of physical and human systems. Furthermore, I have observed that like mapping, a model of the 'landscape of the soul' will conceivably be a highly abstract representation of spiritual life. Nevertheless, I have continued the metaphorical elaboration of landscape by suggesting that, as a system, spiritual life emerges out of our awareness of our relationship with God. By definition, a system is composed of subsystems that interact to create a whole. What are some of the subsystems that are present in a landscape and how can these be extended in the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul'? In the following section, I will examine some of the elements or subsystems in a landscape.

2.3 Elements in a Landscape

As has been noted, landscape is a composite of natural and human systems. Thus, rocks, soil, landforms, water, climate, flora, fauna and humans form some of the basic elements or subsystems that can be found in a landscape. In Figure 2.3 on page 98, each of these elements are represented as interacting with the others. For example, the climate of the area contributes towards the evaporation and precipitation of water. In addition, water resources are influenced through human and animal intervention by such activities as the building of dams. The slopes of landforms, the underlying permeability of the rocks and the presence or absence of

certain types of vegetation are all linked to the movement of water in a landscape which in turn contributes towards the weathering of the rocks and the formation of soil. The type of soil and the presence of particular landforms will affect the type of flora and associated fauna as well as human activities such as agriculture or forestation. Thus, it is possible to reduce the underlying structure of a landscape to numerous subsystems and their interrelationships describable in such terms as geology, geomorphology, hydrology or ecology.

Several elements and processes underlie the 'landscape of the soul'. When listening to a person's story in spiritual direction, several features can frequently be seen to be interacting. Figure 2.4 on page 99, illustrates some elements or subsystems such as neurology, physiology, psychology, theological beliefs, philosophical presuppositions, cultural influences, other people and historical time. Just as in a landscape there are numerous interactions between the subsystems, so too in the 'landscape of the soul' different relationships can be discerned or postulated. For instance, in the neuro-physiological subsystem, a person can suffer from Temporal Lobe Epilepsy and consequently, experience visions of great beauty and power. For example, contemporary researchers have attributed the experiences of Teresa of Avila and her namesake, Thérèse of Lisieux, to Temporal Lobe Epilepsy.[24] Although such experiences can be reduced to pathology, theological or philosophical presuppositions can lead to these experiences being interpreted as a gift from God. Friends and family as well as the general socio-cultural environment can reinforce such interpretations.[25]

In addition to neuro-pathology, different psychological states, including grief, have been linked with the experience of union with God.[26] From a psychological perspective, cycles of mania have been ascribed to Margery Kempe.[27] Similarly, in another example, Jerome Kroll and Roger de Ganck hypothesise that,

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[24] Daniel A Helminiak, 1984, Neurology, Psychology, and Extraordinary Religious Experience, *Journal of Religion and Health*, 23(1): 40.
[25] Andrew Neher, 1990, *The Psychology of Transcendence*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 291.
[26] David Aberbach, 1993, Mystical union and Grief: The Ba-al Shem tov and Krishnamurti, *Harvard Theological Review*, 86(3): 321; David Greenberg, Eliezer Witztum and Jacob T Buchbinder, 1992, Mysticism and Psychosis: the fate of Ben Zoma, *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 65(3): 232.
[27] Phyllis R Freeman, Carley Rees Bogarad and Diane E Sholomskas, 1990, Margery Kempe, A New Theory: The Inadequacy of Hysteria and Postpartum Psychosis as Diagnostic Categories, *History of Psychiatry*, 1: 169.

from a contemporary medical model, Beatrice of Nazareth, a thirteenth century Cistercian nun, may have suffered from manic-depression.[28] Nevertheless Beatrice and her contemporaries explained her experiences from within a theological model in which it was possible to interpret a depressive state as God's absence and a manic state as a sign of God's presence.

In examining the life of Beatrice, Kroll and de Ganck observe that although her practices of self-mutilation were reported to be extreme, nevertheless such penitential practices were part of the cultural milieu and in the case of Beatrice, undertaken as a way of sharing in Christ's passion. Similarly, Beatrice's visionary experience was described in Christian images of the Trinity and the heavenly Jerusalem.[29] In this way, it can be seen that there is an interplay between various factors such as psychology, culture and belief systems.

This observation raises the question of how the Holy Spirit moves within the various subsystems of human life. Does God act from outside or from within human nature? Although I do not discuss these questions in this thesis, I make the assumption that God interacts with the totality of the human system both from within and without. If this assumption is not shared, then experiences attributed to an encounter with God might be denied, ignored or explained in other terms.

The elements in a system are frequently subsystems which overlap and interact with one another to form different networks. For example, geology includes landforms and soil although both of these elements can be considered as separate systems, which are studied in the disciplines of geomorphology and pedology, respectively. In the following exploration of the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul', I will examine three networks: geology, geomorphology and ecology. I suggest that these networks may be considered as analogous to structures and processes found in human life. Thus, I link geology with experiencing, geomorphology with growing, and ecology with relating.

Numerous permutations of the different landscape elements can be made and extended metaphorically in the model. For example, culture could be

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[28] Jerome Kroll and Roger de Ganck, 1986, The Adolescence of a Thirteenth-century Visionary Nun, *Psychological Medicine*, 16: 755.
[29] Ibid., 753.

investigated with reference to the metaphor of climate. Why have I selected geology, geomorphology and ecology and their metaphorical counterparts? This might appear like an arbitrary action. Through their stories, people recount their experiences, particularly of God. In spiritual direction, a person seeks to discern his or her relationship with God through these experiences. Over time, this relationship may be seen to develop as a person grows in the life of the Spirit. Thus, experience, growth and relationships are important in spiritual life. How are these reflected in the 'landscape of the soul'? It will be seen that because of their interactions, the choice of certain systems need not be exclusive of other systems. However, by selecting geology, geomorphology and ecology, I am choosing systems or networks which I hypothesise will reflect the processes of experiencing, growing and relating. In addition, I am limiting the scope of the study and hence making it more manageable.

The first element in the landscape that I wish to study metaphorically is geology. This is a network of systems related to rocks, landforms and soil. Structurally, both physical landscape and its spiritual counterpart are complex. In any particular landscape, the rocks and landforms contribute to its distinctiveness. The geology of the earth provides the initial building blocks underlying landscape. Different chemical elements contribute to various minerals which in turn can be assembled into distinctive types of rock – igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic.[30] The geological characteristics and processes, such as volcanism, tectonic uplift or erosion, that underlie any particular landscape, differ from place to place. For example, an ancient volcano may dominate one landscape whereas, in another landscape the underlying sedimentary rocks of an old seabed predominate.

The geology of an area underlies and is a given in a particular landscape. Similarly, the processes involved in human experiencing provide the foundation in the 'landscape of the soul'. There are numerous theories about human experience and the nature of consciousness that range from studies at the atomic level in brain

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[30] General information concerning geology, geomorphology and ecology has been taken from: P McL D Duff, 1944/1993, *Holmes' Principles of Physical Geology*, 4th ed. London: Chapman & Hall; I D White, D N Mottershead, S J Harrison, 1992, *Environmental Systems*, London: Chapman & Hall; and Daniel B Botkin, 1990, *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty-first Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

functioning to wider work on the construction of social reality.[31] Human life is part of a natural system and as such experiencing occurs within or through the neuro-physiological structures of the human body. Just as chemical elements combine to form different minerals, so too, humanity shares a basic genetic structure although each person has a unique code that modifies this common inheritance and hence his or her particular neuro-physiology. The geology of an area can be changed through internal forces such as metamorphism (pressure and heat) or external forces such as wind or water erosion. Similarly, different processes such as fasting, illness, exercise or concentration can affect human neuro-physiology. Therefore, in the model of the 'landscape of the soul', it is not sufficient to limit a geology of experiencing to basic neuro-physiological events because such events are not isolated from other environmental factors.

I would like to attempt to extend the geological analogy of rock types to distinctive types of behavioural traits. The Greek physician, Hippocrates (400 BC), identified four psychological types: the melancholic or depressed, the choleric or irritable, the sanguine or optimistic, and the phlegmatic or calm.[32] The twentieth century psychotherapist, Carl Jung suggested two dimensions – introversion-extraversion – to describe a person's preferred orientation towards the world. For example, introverts are orientated towards their inner, subjective life and draw their energy from inner resources whereas, extroverts draw their energy from and are orientated towards the outer world. According to this theory, a person's basic orientation to the world affects openness and receptivity to environmental factors as

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[31] For an example of atomic studies of consciousness see the work of Stuart R Hameroff. He identifies the 'unitary sense of self, non-deterministic free-will and non-algorithmic intuitive processing' as characteristics of human consciousness. He suggests that the cytoskeletal microtubules within neurones could be a possible site for quantum events leading to these characteristics. (Stuart R Hameroff, 1994, Quantum Coherence in Microtubules: A Neural Basis For Emergent Consciousness?, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 1(1): 99-118.) For an example of the social construction of reality see George Kelly discussion of commonality and sociality. Here he emphasises interrelationship and understanding of the others as basic to the construction of reality. (G A Kelly, 1955, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, Vol. I, New York: Norton, 95ff; L M Leitner, 1985, The Terrors of Cognition: On the Experiential Validity of Personal Construct Theory, in *Issues and Approaches in Personal Construct Theory*, ed. D Bannister, London: Academic Press Inc., 83-84.)

[32] Rita L Atkinson, Richard C Atkinson, Edward E Smith and Daryl J Bem, 1993, *Introduction to Psychology*, 11th Edition, London: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 525.

well as basic sensory processing. That is, it shapes experience.[33] In addition, the attitudes associated with psychological types are also influential in how a person perceives and interacts with the physical and socio-cultural environment. Attitudes contain a cognitive element pertaining to how the world is perceived, an affective dimension related to feelings and a behavioural component manifested in action.[34] Unlike a geological counterpart of rock types, a consensus does not exist about the basic number of personality traits. Furthermore, the analogy between rock types and psychological typing breaks down when it is realised that such typologies reflect less a state of being and more a preferred mode of action.

This last observation brings one to an interesting point. In the model of the 'landscape of the soul', when geology is metaphorically extended in terms of experience, it is transformed from a particular psychological state into an activity or action. George Kelly compares a person to a scientist testing, revising and developing hypotheses about the world.[35] Out of this process of testing different alternatives, a person creates a system through which it is possible to interpret the world:

> This personal construct system provides him both with freedom of decision and limitation of action – freedom, because it permits him to deal with the meanings of events rather than being helplessly pushed about by them, and limitation, because he can never make choices outside the world of alternatives he has erected for himself.[36]

Hence, although we can share common experiences, our interpretations of these experiences can differ depending on how we construct the world around us. Such constructs of reality are abstractions representing repeated events or choices that we have made. Moreover, for Kelly, 'constructs were chiefly available through

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[33] Hans J Eysenck, 1987, Extraversion-introversion, in *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, ed. Richard L Gregory, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 246-247.
[34] Rita L Atkinson, Richard C Atkinson, Edward E Smith and Daryl J Bem, 1993, *Introduction to Psychology*, 725-735.
[35] Kelly presented his theory of how people make sense of themselves and the world around them in his book, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*. (G A Kelly, 1955, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*.)
[36] George Kelly, 1969, Man's Constructions of His Alternatives, in *Clinical Psychology and Personality*, ed. Brendan Maher, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 88.

interaction with others and obtained their meaning in the context of that interaction'.[37] Therefore, in our construction of reality, we are, in Macmurray's terms, agents.[38]

Thus, at the level of geology in the landscape such systems as neurology, physiology and psychology can be discerned. However, these systems do not act independently or in isolation. They are modified by other systems such as culture and are contingent upon historical time and place such as in the case of Hippocrates' four types or Jung's scheme of introversion-extroversion. The interrelatedness of the different elements is evident in colloquial language where we speak about the influence of the cultural 'climate' or about historical 'undercurrents'. Hence, in considering human consciousness and the processes related to experiencing, the 'bottom-up' approach which begins from the basic laws of physics and chemistry needs to be supplemented by a 'top-down' perspective that takes into account such factors as other people, the socio-cultural environment, and belief systems.[39]

In the 'landscape of the soul', I propose that there is a geology of experiencing that is related to the physical-psychological complex of the human being. Like its physical counterpart, at any point in time, this complex is a given in the 'landscape of the soul' and subject to both inner and outer forces and processes. However, in contrast to its physical analogy, such a geology represents an activity consonant with a conception of a person as an agent.

The second element or subsystem in the system of landscape that I wish to explore is geomorphology. Like rocks, landforms are another structural element in a landscape. The study of geomorphology is concerned with the forms and structures of the earth's surface and the processes that mould these. It is through the different landform features, a landscape is given shape. Landforms cannot be reduced simply to an underlying geology. Many forces such as wind, water, ice, human activity and geological processes such a volcanism or tectonic uplift contribute towards the shaping of the earth's surface. Landscape features emerge through the complex

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[37] L M Leitner, 1985, The Terrors of Cognition: On the Experiential Validity of Personal Construct Theory, in *Issues and Approaches in Personal Construct Theory*, ed. Donald Bannister, London: Academic Press Ltd, 84.
[38] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 15.
[39] Roger Sperry, 1977/1990, Forebrain commissurontomy and conscious awareness, in *Brain Circuits and Functions of the Mind*, ed. Colwyn Trevarthen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 382-383.

interrelationships of these different processes. Thus, a landscape needs to viewed not only spatially but temporally. A study of the geomorphology of a landscape may focus on a particular region in which distinct landforms are mapped such as a glacial area with its drumlins, eskers and moraines or alternatively, landscape geomorphology may be restricted to tracing the development of a single, prominent landform, such as a mountain. Therefore, because a landscape evolves through time, any stage in the history of a landscape can be traced regionally or at the level of a particular landform.

In the model of the 'landscape of the soul', I suggest a geomorphology of growth and development. The study of human development has been one of the major concerns in psychology during the twentieth century and the debate as to what criteria to use in determining different stages in life has given rise to numerous theories that have centred on biological, cognitive or social factors. At a basic level, developmental changes can be observed through physical growth and age may be a useful guide in infancy and early childhood where many biological changes occur. However, even at a biological level there is an interaction with environmental factors. For example, socio-economic status may influence the amount and quality of food available to nourish growth. Age is a less reliable indicator as a person gets older and developmental features are intricately related to present conditions, as well as to the successful negotiation of previous phases of physical, social and cultural growth. Thus, the progression of human growth from early infancy to old age is complex. Hence, any model pertaining to human development will need to be flexible to allow for the variation in the interactions between different contributory factors.

In geomorphology, sedimentation refers to the process of depositing materials that have been transported by different agents such as wind, ice or water. We have already seen that McFadyen uses this metaphor to describe the development of personal identity. Here, the interactions between people, between people and their environment and between people and God are like the materials that are carried by different agents. These interactions are deposited as particular patterns of communication that build up over time to create a person's identity.

Various schemes have been postulated about spiritual growth in prayer and

in life. For example, in the *Interior Castle*, Teresa of Avila describes the soul as passing through seven mansions as it journeys towards union with God.[40] Similarly, the threefold way elaborated by Origen developed into a basic framework used to depict spiritual growth through purification, illumination and union.[41] More recently, the theologian and psychologist, Daniel Helminiak postulated a five stage theory to delineate psycho-spiritual growth and development.[42] In metaphorically extending the element of geomorphology, the broad spectrum of psycho-spiritual growth could be conceived as analogous to a regional geomorphology where the development of a landscape is traced through time. In contrast, the development of prayer could be compared to the evolution of a particular landform within that region.

In the 'landscape of the soul', I propose that there is a geomorphology of growing that is related to human growth and development. More specifically, in the model, a geomorphology of growing can be postulated at two levels. Like regional geomorphology, the focus can be upon an overall general psycho-spiritual growth. Or like in the study of particular landforms, attention can be paid to the distinctive phenomenon of prayer.

The third element or subsystem in landscape that I wish to look at is ecology. Landscapes are characterised not only by their underlying geology and surface geomorphology but also by the different ecosystems that are present. Ecology may be broadly defined as the study of the interactions between organisms and their environment.[43] One model used to describe the interrelationships present in any ecological system is the trophic-dynamic. Here, the transformation of solar radiation is traced through different systems: the primary production system which photosynthesises the solar radiation into chemical energy, the grazing-predator system which consumes the primary producers/grazers, the detrital or decompositional system which breaks down the energy contained in the primary or grazing-predator systems and returns it to the soil system, which cycles it back into the primary system. This basic system with its transformations and losses of energy is reflected in the distribution, composition and density of different species at any

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[40] Teresa of Avila, 1946, *Interior Castle*, in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*.
[41] Andrew Louth, 1981, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 58-59.
[42] Daniel A Helminiak, 1987, *Spiritual Development*, 77-96.
[43] I D White, D N Mottershead and S J Harrison, 1992, *Environmental Systems*, 389.

one place and time. As in the geological and geomorphological subsystems, the various landscape elements interact. Thus, where climatically, an area suffers drought, the vegetation cover may decrease with an increase in severe erosion. In association with these developments, because of lack of food and water, animals may migrate or die out. This is an example of positive feedback in a landscape and it leads to instability and change in the systems that are present. Subsequently, the transformation of energy is modified as these changes occur in the ecological systems.

In the 'landscape of the soul', ecology can be metaphorically extended to represent the interrelationships between the person and God and between the person and other people and their wider environment, that is, the scope of the community of relationships that a person may enter into either directly or indirectly. In the trophic-dynamic model of ecology, the flow and transformation of solar energy is traced. If an analogy is drawn in the 'landscape of the soul', it could be posited that God's love resembles solar radiation. Most of the solar radiation that strikes the earth falls outside the range of visible light and forms a background radiation that is invisible to humans. According to Bernard Lonergan, God's love is like 'background music' that is always present.[44] In this respect, it is similar to background radiation. Christian life involves the life-long process of learning to perceive and attend to the music of God's love. However, it is at this point that the extension of the landscape model through the metaphor of solar radiation collapses. In natural systems, the transformation of radiation is impersonal whereas, in Christian life, the transformation of God's love is contingent upon human choice. A person's relationship or non-relationship with God like ecological systems can be influenced by other factors. For example, people may reject God on the basis of images that they received in religious education or because of the particular environment in which they have lived.[45] Although the trophic-dynamic analogy breaks down, I suggest that it is still a useful analogy but that it needs to be examined with reference

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[44] Bernard Lonergan, 1971, *Method in Theology*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 290.

[45] For many years, I worked with people from Alcoholics Anonymous who were beginning to explore the possibilities of a higher power. On numerous occasions, I was told that a person had rejected God because the God that he/she had learned about in Sunday school was vengeful and vindictive, even killing his own son. Others reported a communistic or materialistic upbringing as a reason for a lack of belief in and experience of God.

to other characteristics in a landscape.

Thus, in the 'landscape of the soul', I propose that there is an ecology of relating that is related to human relationships. In the model of the 'landscape of the soul', ecology involves the network of relationships between an individual and other people, the environment and God. More specifically, ecology can be viewed as the transformation of God's love in a person's life.

In the foregoing exploration, landscape has been approached from the viewpoint of systems. In conjunction with the typology of systems proposed by Peter Checkland, I have suggested that Christian spirituality might be conceived as emerging from a person's conscious awareness of interacting with God, where God was likened to Checkland's transcendental system. Thus, Christian spirituality involves the human-environment complex of systems as well as the transcendental. From a further exploration of some of the elements or subsystems that are found in a landscape, I have suggested three networks in this system – a geology of experiencing, a geomorphology of growing, and an ecology of relating.

Earlier I drew attention to two characteristics of systems: emergence and hierarchy, and communication and control. If we are thinking in terms of emergence and hierarchy in a system, it can be said that landscape emerges from the composite of natural and human systems. It is, in the words of J B Jackson, a '*synthetic* space.'[46] Therefore, it might be expected that a landscape could be described by a distinct set of properties. In the course of the development of landscape geography, this hypothesis has been verified through observation. This point brings us to another approach in the exploration of the metaphor of 'landscape of the soul'. Landscape can be described with reference to its structure, function and changes over time.[47] In the following three sections, I will metaphorically examine these aspects of landscape.

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[46] J B Jackson, The Vernacular Landscape, in *Landscape Meanings and Values*, 7.
[47] Richard T T Forman and Michel Godron, 1986, *Landscape Ecology*, 11. The subsequent discussion of the structure, function and change in a landscape is based on work found in Forman and Godron's *Landscape Ecology*.

2.4 The Structure of Landscape

At each level of complexity in a hierarchy, different properties become evident. In systems thinking, a new terminology is created to describe these emergent features. Regardless of the variation in the elements or subsystems that comprise a landscape such as its geology, geomorphology, ecology, or human factors, landscapes exhibit a fundamental structure. These emergent characteristics in the structure of a landscape are the matrix, patches and corridors.[48] The matrix forms the background; patches are areas of difference from the general surroundings; corridors are areas facilitating or blocking movement through the landscape. Through the different combinations of these emergent properties, distinctive landscapes are created. Figure 2.5 on page 100, figuratively illustrates an imaginative agricultural landscape system with its matrix (fields), corridors (road and streams) and patches (forest).

In a landscape, which is composed of several landscape elements, the matrix is the predominant element. The matrix may be comprised of such things as forest, farmland, desert, housing estates or industrial parks. In Figure 2.5, the matrix is farmland. The matrix is usually the most connected element and exerts the most influence upon the dynamics of a landscape, that is the ecological relationships present.[49] Together with the network of corridors that are present, the matrix affects movement. The matrix is essentially a construct delineating the boundary of the landscape as a system. As I have already noted, a landscape can be a vast vista or an intimate place; it can be a natural space or an urban conglomeration. Thus, the matrix of a landscape varies according to the landscape that is defined and the resolution at which it is viewed.

The matrix in the 'landscape of the soul' is formed by those elements that are shared in any one time or place. If we consider the geological network, there are basic elements which are shared amongst all humans, those that are particular to smaller groups of people and finally, the sedimentation related to an individual.

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[48] For a discussion of matrix, patches and corridors see Chapters 5, 3 and 4, respectively, in Richard T T Forman and Michel Godron, 1986, *Landscape Ecology*.
[49] Ibid., 157-186; I D White, D N Mottershead and S J Harrison, 1992, *Environmental Systems*, 409-416.

Additional elements such as other people, social, cultural and belief systems interact with the geological network. The matrix emerges out of the common factors that are present in any context. Seen from the perspective of spiritual direction, a matrix functions in a similar way to what Hans-Georg Gadamer defines as a 'horizon', that is, a set of pre-understandings or 'prejudices' that draw upon the socio-cultural environment of a particular historical time-place.[50] Although a basic matrix may be a given in a particular situation, it is differentiated by the presence of personal patterns of patches and it is shaped over time by the development of corridors of communication.

Patches are areas in the landscape with a different ecology from the prevailing surroundings. Patches may be classified into four types dependent upon their origin. In environmental resource patches, the environmental conditions are different from the surrounding area. Consequently, a patch develops with a different ecology. These patches are not caused by disturbance and hence there may be a gradual gradient from the surrounding area rather than a sharp boundary. A particular landform such as an extinct volcanic cone in a plain can produce an environmental patch. In a spot disturbance patch, a small area of the landscape has been disturbed or modified in some way whilst the area around it remains unchanged. A remnant patch occurs where there is widespread disturbance of the surroundings and only a remnant of the former ecological community remains. Ephemeral patches are caused by short-term fluctuations in the environment.[51] Patches can be linked together by narrow strips that function as corridors. In Figure 2.5, a resource patch has been represented by a hill on the farmland and a remnant patch is depicted as forest.

It is my contention that patches can be metaphorically extended in a 'landscape of the soul'. Stephen Crites distinguished three strands in experience – the sacred story, the mundane embodiment of this story and the temporal or personal story.[52] I suggest that in a 'landscape of the soul', the patches represent the

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[50] Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1989, *Truth and Method*, 302.
[51] Richard T T Forman and Michel Godron, 1986, *Landscape Ecology*, 83-120; I D White, D N Mottershead and S J Harrison, 1992, *Environmental Systems*, 409-416.
[52] Stephen Crites, 1971, The Narrative Quality of Experience, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 39(3): 291.

'temporal' strand of experience. It is through patches that individual differences are introduced into the matrix of time and place. Thus, a person's physiological and psychological characteristics could provide the basis for geological variations from the matrix. In this way, these characteristics could be seen to contribute to the development of environment resource patches, that is, unique patterns of ecological relationships. Particular religious practices that are undertaken can lead to distinct variations from the norm such as in a disturbance patch. Similarly, a remnant patch can arise from past beliefs and experiences. Just as each landscape can have its own specific patterns of patches, so too, in the metaphorical 'landscape of the soul', the patches represent that which is characteristic to an individual. In physical landscapes, different patterns of ecological relationships are depicted by the location, distribution and content of patches. Here, one sees the product of the interactions between geology and geomorphology as well as other factors such as climate and hydrology. Similarly, in the 'landscape of the soul', the network of relationships are unique to each individual.

Corridors facilitate the movement of energy, materials and organisms through a landscape or they can act as barriers against such movement. Corridors can be natural as in a stream or artificially created like a canal or road.[53] Line corridors are narrow bands such as hedgerows, natural tracks and roads. Such corridors can provide migration routes, a habitat for edge species and transport systems. In Figure 2.5, there is a river corridor and a road represents a line corridor. Strip corridors are similar to line corridors. However, because they are wider, they supply an interior habitat as well. Swathes cut for hydroelectric lines are an example of strip corridors. Networks are corridors that are interconnected in such a way that loops are created which create alternative pathways for movement.

As was seen earlier, Alistair McFadyen suggests that God's interaction with creation can be conceived as 'the transfer of information' through 'call and response'.[54] In the 'landscape of the soul', corridors are those practices that facilitate the encounter with God, that is, 'the transfer of information', where the information

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[53] Richard T T Forman and Michel Godron, 1986, *Landscape Ecology*, 121-155; I D White, D N Mottershead and S J Harrison, 1992, *Environmental Systems*, 409-416.
[54] Alistair I McFadyen, 1990, *The Call to Personhood*, 18-23.

is God's self-revelation or communication of love. In Christian spiritual life, the liturgy, the scriptures and prayer and meditation, provide important corridors of communication. In addition, because a person belongs to a wider community, this fundamental flow of God's love may also come through the network of relationships with other people and the environment.

However, in the 'landscape of the soul', the movement through corridors is more than a simple 'transfer of information'.[55] Concomitant with God's call or address is the possibility of human response. The trophic-dynamic model of transformation collapsed as a consequence of human choice. However, when landscape is considered as a composite of environmental and human systems, it has been observed that landscape emerges from and cuts through all the systems proposed by Checkland. Therefore, human activity systems such as a network of roads or a railway system can be a part of a landscape. Human activity systems can be different from what they are because they are contingent upon human choice. Hence, in model, the element of human choice can be introduced through landscape corridors. God's call and human response facilitated through the presence (or absence) of corridors. The 'hospitableness' of a landscape refers to the resistance of a landscape to the movement of energy, materials or information.[56] For example, the practice of prayer, like a corridor in a landscape, can increase the hospitableness of the 'landscape of the soul' through generating an open and expectant attitude towards God. It is in this way that corridors provide a metaphorical means of introducing choice into the ecology of relationships.

Landscape can be described in terms of its structure, function and change. Three emergent properties have been associated with the structure of a landscape. A landscape will have a matrix, which is the most predominate feature that forms the background. In the model, the matrix will be that which a person shares with others in a particular time and place. Within the matrix of a landscape, patches are areas where there are differences. In our metaphor, patches represent individual differences. Corridors aid the movement through a landscape and likewise, in the model, different corridors can facilitate communication between an individual and

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[55] Alistair I McFadyen, 1990, *The Call to Personhood*, 7.
[56] Richard T T Forman and Michel Godron, 1983, *Landscape Ecology*, 405.

God as well as the wider community. Structure underlies and contributes to the function of a landscape. This second characteristic of landscape is explored in the following section.

2.5 Function in a Landscape

The 'function' of a landscape refers to the dynamics of the system. That is, the concern is with what is happening in the landscape. The dynamics of a landscape can be studied in various ways. At one level, detailed analysis could be made about the movements of energy in the system. For example, the chemical transformations of solar radiation can be traced through the different ecological systems. Alternatively, the mass movements of animals across a landscape could be followed, such as in the migration of the caribou in arctic areas. In these studies, the focus is upon specific interactions between the components of the landscape. An examination of the changes associated with different types of prayer could be conceived as analogous to this detailed type of investigation of what is happening in a landscape. However, a more general approach can be taken to the study of function in a landscape where function is viewed in terms of a system with particular inputs, transformations and outputs. Here, the focus is upon the basic transformations that are occurring. The first approach to the study of function involves numerous detailed investigations in order to create a picture of what is happening in a landscape. Therefore, in the following exploration of the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul', I will look at function generally in terms of a system and its transformations.

As a simple system, the function of a landscape can be conceived in terms of input, transformation and output. When looking at a landscape, two fundamental questions need to be addressed. First, what kind of system is represented? The answer to this question involves naming the system. Second, what does the system do? To answer this question, the flows of materials, information or energy including the interactions between various subsystems are traced through the system. Because a transformational process is at the heart of a system thus conceived, the concern is with the activities or actions that occur.

Before proceeding to the model of the 'landscape of the soul', let us

consider an imaginary physical landscape that could be named a 'cabbage farm'. This system is depicted in Figure 2.5, found on page 100. The system could be described in greater detail through elaborating the activities that are taking place. For example, the 'cabbage farm' might be construed as a system to cultivate, harvest and distribute cabbages for human consumption, the conversion of solar radiation into chemical energy via cabbages. That is a verbose statement that might be more simply said as 'I am growing cabbages for the local market'. Nevertheless, the longer reply suggests both some of the major activities as well as the basic transformational process that is present in the landscape of a cabbage farm. In this imaginary farm model, the input into the landscape system is both natural (solar radiation, seeds, water etc.) and human (labour, machinery etc.). In constructing a model of the cabbage farm, the structure of and the interrelationships found in the landscape need to be taken into account. Structural elements include such things as soil type, rock outcrops, the crop species, and the angle of slopes. The activities of the system, that is, what the 'cabbage farm' does, includes both natural processes and human actions. Important processes include the solar radiation regime, the hydrological cycle and the rate of erosion, and human activities include those actions related to cultivation such as planting or crop rotation, harvesting and distribution, taking the cabbages to market. The output of the system takes into consideration not only the harvest but also the changes that have occurred in the environment. If the environment aggrades, there is an increase in the storage of energy in the system. For example, this occurs when a crop is ploughed back into the field. The system may remain in a steady state such as a fallow field. Or the system can degrade. In this case, there is a loss of energy perhaps as a result of severe erosion. Economic and social elements are influential because they may determine what crops are grown and how the produce is distributed. In this example, the function of the landscape system – its primary activity of growing of cabbages – is described from the perspective of the farmer.

How the function of a landscape is defined will vary according to the particular worldview that is held, the historical time and the interest group. Hence, for any given landscape, there could be a possible range of functions delineated. For example, an industrialist and a fisherman looking at a landscape with a canal would probably discern different functions – the transport of goods and the provision of

fish, respectively. Neither of these perspectives and definitions of function are necessarily 'correct' or 'definitive'. Rather, they are specific to a distinctive situation seen from a particular worldview.

In the model of the 'landscape of the soul', I have suggested an inner landscape in which different elements or subsystems interact and form networks such as a geology of experiencing, a geomorphology of growing and an ecology of relating. These networks name processes or activities that can be found in the 'landscape of the soul' – a landscape which emerges out of a matrix specific to the time and place and is modified by personal patches and by particular corridors of communication. Overall, what could we name this system? I suggest that the 'landscape of the soul' might be called the system of transformation or re-creation of a person through the love of God.

A geographer can look at a landscape and ask 'What is happening?' So too, in spiritual direction, the director, asks 'What is happening? How is the Spirit moving in this person's life?' In order to analyse the function, what is happening in the 'landscape of the soul', I will look first at the input to the landscape. Then, I will briefly examine what is perceived as the output. More will be said about the output in the following section on change in a landscape. However, it is necessary to look briefly at output here because output will help us to see how we get from input to output. That is, the output will help us to name the landscape system and provide us with a hypothetical idea of how the function in the 'landscape of the soul' may be characterised.

In formulating a working definition of Christian spirituality, one of the tenets put forth was that God communicates with humankind. In this picture, the input to the 'landscape of the soul' begins with God. God acts in the world. For example, God walks with Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3.8); God called Abraham into a new land (Gen. 12.1-4); God spoke to Moses in the burning bush and led the people of Israel in a pillar of fire through the wilderness (Exodus 3 and 13.17-22); and God continued through the history of Israel to speak to the prophets as the writer to Hebrews observes:

> Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is

> the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word (Heb. 1.1-3).

Thus, God is a God who reaches out to humankind. For Christians, God's fundamental self-revelation is through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus – 'he has spoken to us by a Son' (Heb. 2.2). Therefore, if God's communication is considered as the input to the 'landscape of the soul', then, for Christians, God speaks through Jesus Christ, who is God's Word (John 1.1-18). Irenaeus observes that although God is revealed through creation, God is revealed even more through the Word, that is, Jesus Christ.[57]

Furthermore, it is claimed that the God who communicates is a God of love. In the Gospel of John, it is declared that

> God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life (John 3.16).

Here, as in the Incarnation, humankind is confronted by a mystery, that is, the revelation of God's love through the Cross of Christ. Paul refers to this as 'foolishness'.[58] Moreover, not only is God's love freely given, it is transformative:

> But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive with Christ... (Eph. 2.4a).

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[57] In Book IV of *Against Heresies*, where Irenaeus is describing how, in both the Old and New Testaments, God works for the salvation of humankind, he writes:

> Thus from the beginning the Son is the Revealer of the Father, since from the beginning he was with the Father: prophetic visions, diversities of gifts, his ministries, the glorification of the Father, he has shown forth all that to men for their benefit at the right time, like a well-composed and harmonious melody. Where there is composition there is melody; where there is melody it is at the right time; where there is the right time, there is benefit. And because the Word became the dispenser of the Father's grace for the benefit of the men for whom he made such great "economies", he showed God to man and man to God, preserving the invisibility of the Father so that man would not become a despiser of God but would always have a goal toward which to advance, and at the same time making God visible to men through his many "economies" so that man might not be totally deprived of God and perish. For the glory of God is the living man, and the life of man is the vision of God. If the revelation of God by the creation already gives life to all the beings living on earth, how much more does the manifestation of the Father by the Word give life to those who see God! (Irenaeus, 1997, Translation against Heresies: On the Detection and Refutation of the Knowledge Falsely So Called, Book IV 20.7, in *Irenaeus of Lyons*, Robert M Grant, London: Routledge, 153.)

[58] For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1.22-24).

Thus, as far as the input to the 'landscape of the soul' is concerned, God takes the initiative and communicates to humankind. In addition, this input is one of love. Humankind encounters a mystery and through this mystery of love we are made 'alive with Christ' (Eph. 2.4a).[59]

What I have called input in systems language, McFayden refers to as God's address to humankind. McFayden likens God's communication to a call to discipleship in the same way that Jesus called his first disciples.[60] However, it cannot be assumed that such an address will be automatically recognised and a response made. In elaborating an ecology of relating, I suggested that the input to the 'landscape of the soul' was analogous to solar radiation. This reflected Bernard Lonergan's observation that God's love is like background music of which people may not be aware:

> It is as though a room were filled with music though one can have no sure knowledge of its source. There is in the world, as it were, a charged field of love and meaning; here and there it reaches a notable intensity; but it is ever unobtrusive, hidden, inviting each of us to join. And join we must if we are to perceive it, for our perceiving is though our own loving.[61]

Although a strict analogy between solar radiation and God's love cannot be sustained because of human choice, it is still possible to imagine that God's love is around us and being poured out onto us (Acts 17.28; Acts 10.45). If the scriptures, liturgy and prayer are like corridors of communication, then a person may encounter Christ through these media and in this way, become aware of God's love. In addition, other sources in life such as natural beauty, literature, art and music can also convey God's love as the respondents to the survey conducted by Alister Hardy reported.[62] Therefore, what we begin to see is the activity of God seeking to meet people in the details of their daily life. What remains to be seen is the choice of human response.

I have described briefly what the input to the 'landscape of the soul' might be considered to be. Now, I would like to focus upon the output of the system. To what end is God's love poured out upon creation? The goal of spiritual life is

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[59] For an exposition of Paul's use of the word mystery, see Louis Bouyer, 1990, *The Christian Mystery: From Pagan Myth to Christian Mysticism*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 5-18.
[60] Alistair I McFadyen, 1990, *The Call to Personhood*, 48-53.
[61] Bernard Lonergan, 1971, *Method in Theology*, 290.
[62] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 20-21, 28.

described in a variety of ways such as the vision of God. For Christian, in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the vision of God is represented by the Celestial City where he will 'enjoy perpetual sight and vision of the Holy One'.[63] Bunyan's portrayal suggests an everlasting fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

The goal of spiritual life has also been described as union with God. The discourse during the Last Supper has provided a basis for the claim that we may be united to God through Christ. Here, Jesus promises his disciples:

> I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you (John 14.18-20).

Jesus continues the discourse and through the use of the illustration of the vine indicates that that it is through the keeping of his commandments to love one another that the disciples will abide in his love as he abides in God's love (John 15.1-17).[64]

The theme of being 'in Christ' is woven throughout the Pauline corpus.[65] To be 'in Christ' has a dual nature. Through baptism, a person is incorporated into Christ's death and resurrection and is clothed with or puts on Christ (Gal. 2.27). This is once and for all, a state of union which is given to us (Rom. 6.3-11). Nevertheless, baptism is only a beginning. Irenaeus describes union as occurring in Jesus Christ 'who because of his immeasurable love became what we are in order to make us what he is'.[66] To be what Christ is, is to be transformed into the image and likeness

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[63] John Bunyan, [no date], *Pilgrim's Progress*, 177-178.

[64] Later in the discourse, as part of Jesus' prayer that God will glorify him so that he may glorify God, Jesus prays:

> I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be us... (John 17. 20, 21a).

[65] Louis Bouyer, 1990, *The Christian Mystery*, 104-109.

[66] Irenaeus, 1997, Translation against Heresies: On the Detection and Refutation of the Knowledge Falsely So Called, Book V Pr., 164. Earlier when discussing God's love and desire for our salvation, Irenaeus wrote that:

> In his love, however, he is always known through the one through whom he created everything. This is his Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the last times was made man so that he might join the end to the beginning, that is, man to God. (Irenaeus, 1997, Translation against Heresies: On the Detection and Refutation of the Knowledge Falsely So Called, Book IV 20.4, 152.

of God.[67] In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes:

> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3. 17-18).

This transformation into Christ's image suggests a process in that it proceeds from 'one degree of glory to another'. Gregory of Nyssa describes the movement of the soul deeper and deeper into God as *epectasis*.[68] Although a person may be transformed into the likeness of Christ and hence participate in the life of God, this is not the end-point of spiritual life. Rather:

> In our constant participation in the blessed nature of the Good, the graces that we receive at every point are indeed great, but that path that lies beyond our immediate grasp is infinite. This will constantly happen to those who thus share in the divine Goodness, and they will always enjoy a greater and greater participation in grace throughout eternity.[69]

Thus, union with God can be conceived less as a state and more as a continual deepening of participation in the life of God. It is through Christ, in whom the human and the divine are united, that humankind is transformed and brought into conformity with the image and likeness of God.

Assuming that the input to the 'landscape of the soul' is God's love and that the output might be described as union with God, how do we get from one to the other? In other words, what is happening? First, it can be noted that the process of transformation in the 'landscape of the soul' is contingent upon human choice. I have defined landscape as a composite between human and natural systems. Through

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[67] In his discussion of the meaning of 'in the image' of God, Lossky concludes that:

> Man created "in the image" is the person capable of manifesting God in the extent to which his nature allows itself to be penetrated by deifying grace. Thus the image – which is inalienable – can become similar or dissimilar, to the extreme limits: that of union with God, when deified man shows in himself by grace what God is by nature, according to the expression of St. Maximus; or indeed that of the extremity of falling-away which Plotinus called "the place of dissimilarity"..., placing it in the gloomy abyss of Hades. (Vladimir Lossky, 1974, The Theology of the Image, in *In the Image and Likeness of God*, London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 139.)

For a further discussion of 'image and likeness' see Dumitru Staniloae, 1986, Image, Likeness, and Deification in the Human Person, *Communio*, 13(1): 64-83.

[68] Jean Daniélou, 1979, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 56-71.

[69] Gregory of Nyssa quoted by Jean Daniélou, 1979, *From Glory to Glory*, 211-212.

the human dimension, a landscape can be modified, shaped, defined and given meaning. Therefore, in the 'landscape of the soul', once God's love has been recognised or alternatively, God's call has been heard, we are faced with a choice. Will we respond with a yes, no, or the procrastinating maybe, which in effect is a conditional no? What will an affirmative response mean in the 'landscape of the soul'? This question brings us to a focal point in the landscape model – the dynamics of the relationship that emerges out of the encounter with the mystery of God.

In examining the function of a landscape, the geographer asks the question, 'What is happening?' However, for a Christian, what is happening now begins with what has happened. Christ is the cornerstone. The process manifested in the 'landscape of the soul' represents our transformation or re-creation through the grace of God so that we become increasingly united with God in Christ. The function of the 'landscape of the soul', that is, the transformation which is occurring, may be described in terms of a spiral of love. God's love is freely given to us. If we accept this love and respond in love, we enter into the life of Christ and through Christ, God dwells in us. According to the first letter of John:

> So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them...We love because he first loved us (1 John 4.16, 19).

When questioned by a lawyer about the highest commandment in the law, Jesus replied that we should love God with our whole being and similarly, love our neighbours as ourselves (Matt. 22.37-19). Moreover, during the Last Supper, in the example of the true vine, Jesus described a mutual indwelling emerging from keeping these commandments (John 15.1-13). Thus, it is through love that there is a union with love. This brings us to the question of what it means 'to love' and how this can be described in terms of a transformational activity in the 'landscape of the soul'. To explore this aspect of the metaphor of landscape, let us return to what John Macmurray calls the 'form of the personal'.[70]

In formulating a working definition of Christian spirituality, it was postulated that such a spirituality was relational. Furthermore, it was suggested that the relationships that unfolded were personal. At that point, I drew upon the work of

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[70] See Chapter 5 in John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 106ff.

John Macmurray who argued that rather than conceiving people as 'thinkers' we envision them as 'doers' whose actions in the world include an intentional component.[71] As agents, we are part of and constrained by the world in which we live. Macmurray contends that our ability to act rests on the assumption that the world itself is a unity, that is one action and hence intentional.[72] He concludes that:

> There is, then, only one way in which we can think our relation to the world, and that is to think it as a personal relation, through the form of the personal. We must think that the world is one action, and that its impersonal aspect is the negative aspect of this unity of action, contained in it, subordinated within it, and necessary to its constitution. To conceive the world thus is to conceive it as the act of God, the Creator of the world, and ourselves as created agents, with a limited and dependent freedom to determine the future, which can be realized only on the condition that our intentions are in harmony with His intention, and which must frustrate itself if they are not.[73]

What Macmurray is suggesting is that we conceive the world as the one action of God in which all actions and events form a part. However, if we have freedom of choice, then God's one action is evolving and through our actions we can become co-workers with God in Christ. However, the choice is ours. If this is so, then, with respect to the model of the 'landscape of the soul', the transformational process of the system could be conceived as the union of love in action.

When a person acts in accord with God's one action, the person is in unity with God. It may be recalled that one of the pair of characteristics of systems was communication and control. Positive feedback could be seen as the succession of choices and acts made in unity with God's one act reinforcing and building upon each other. This could result in an ever increasing openness to God's transforming love. Gregory of Nyssa described this process:

> Participation in the divine good is such that, where it occurs, it makes the participant ever greater and more spacious than before, bringing to it an increase in size and strength, in such wise that the participant, nourished in this way, never stops growing and keeps getting larger and larger. Indeed, as the Source of good keeps flowing and welling up without end, so too the participant, as it becomes larger, grows more and more in desire, by the fact that nothing that it receives is lost or left unused, and everything that flows in produces an increase in capacity. Thus the two are functions of each other: the potency that is nourished grows by the reception of the good, and the

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[71] John Macmurray, 1957, *The Self as Agent*, 48.
[72] Ibid., 220-221.
[73] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 222.

> nourishing Source keeps overflowing as the increased store of goods becomes ever greater. It is clear, then, how large it can become, since there is no limit to stop its growth.[74]

In this description of spiritual life, the soul grows continually. Seen in terms of the model, the transformational activity becomes a spiralling of love. Through God's love, we are enabled to love and participate in the God. However, in so far as we respond to God's love through actions in conformity with God's action, our capacity for love is increased and God's love overflows in our lives. Thus, the transformation of love occurs and if we accept that union with God is a process, we discover that the function of the 'landscape of the soul' becomes the goal or output.

When I started to explore the function of a landscape as a metaphor, I gave an example that I named a 'cabbage farm'. I then elaborated this definition by describing it in terms of its activities. That is, I moved from the conception of what the system is to what the system does. In Chapter 1, I have hypothesised that landscape may be used as a model for Christian life, therefore, if we were to name the system represented by model, we might conjecture that Christian life is the transformation or re-creation in the love of God. From the preceding discussion, how can we describe this system in terms of its activities? I suggest that the 'landscape of the soul' represents a continuing process: the in-put of God's love; the soul's response and action; and through God's grace, the activity of being transformed in love by love. Remembering the industrialist and fisherman looking at a canal, it needs to be remembered that the naming of a system and the elaboration of its function is not definitive. Thus, the 'landscape of the soul' could be named and described differently.

However, for the purposes of this thesis, the function of the 'landscape of the soul' is interpreted as a transformation in love initiated and sustained by God. In addition to identifying what is happening in a landscape at any given time, a geographer also takes note of the changes that are occurring in the landscape over time. Similarly, in spiritual direction, the participants may discern the movements of the Spirit in a person's life both over time as well as in the present moment. This observation brings us to the last of the characteristics of landscape – change. In the

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[74] Gregory of Nyssa quoted by Jean Daniélou, 1979, *From Glory to Glory*, 62-63.

following section, I will examine change in the 'landscape of the soul' in three areas of spiritual life: discernment, union and the fruits of the Spirit.

2.6 Change in a Landscape

Change refers to the alteration of a landscape's structure and function over time. Change can be rapid as in an earthquake or gradual over time as in sedimentation. It can be related to natural processes such as erosion and tectonic uplift or to human activities such as land reclamation, cultivation or engineering (dams, irrigation channels and mines). Human activities provide a prominent catalyst for landscape change. For example, whole landscapes have been transformed by urbanisation or deforestation. One of the parameters used in examining change in a landscape is its general tendency over time.[75] Are changes increasing such as the encroachment of a desert, decreasing as in the stabilisation of a field recovering after a fire or is the landscape remaining fairly level with perhaps regular oscillations around a mean? Seasonal climatic changes with its associated changes in a landscape provide an example of level change with regular oscillations.

Change through time is an important factor in the geomorphology of an area both at a regional level and for particular landforms. In the 'landscape of the soul', I have suggested analogies with psycho-spiritual stages of growth and development with the former, and stages of prayer with the latter. In listening to another's' story, it is necessary to take into account where that person is with regard to physical and psycho-spiritual growth. For example, an adolescent's stormy conflict with parents may surface in his or her attitude towards God. The dramatic and rapid changes in landscape might be seen in terms of conversion experiences where it is possible to observe the distinct transformation of a person's life. On the other hand, little or no directional change may be observed in a person's life. For example, it has been questioned whether a severely mentally handicapped person can respond to the Holy Spirit.[76] However, in *The Road to Daybreak*, Henri Nouwen observes that is through the 'the language of body' that people with mental handicaps interact with God in

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[75] Richard T T Forman and Michel Godron, 1986, *Landscape Ecology*, 429.
[76] Donald Ratcliffe, 1980, Toward a Christian Perspective of Developmental Disability, *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 8: 333.

Christ.[77] Thus, in evaluating change in the 'landscape of the soul', the context or matrix needs to be taken into account. Otherwise, schemes and observations made under one set of circumstances may be indiscriminately applied to an inappropriate situation.

Richard Forman and Michel Godron enumerate five steps that are necessary to evaluate change in a landscape:

1. See whether there is a general tendency or direction of landscape change over time.
2. See how the oscillations (large or small relative to the changing average) are superimposed on the general tendency.
3. Determine whether the oscillations are regular or irregular.
4. Locate the deflections or breaks in rhythm and see whether a new regime is established or not.
5. Determine the forces that have broken the regime – that are, therefore, the disturbances.[78]

These steps for examining change in landscape might possibly be rephrased as pointers for a spiritual director:

1. Attentively observe whether there is a 'general tendency' in the dialogue that is emerging between God and a person over time. For example, does the person seem to be drawing closer to God?
2. Observe oscillations between approach or commitment to the movement of the Holy Spirit and avoidance or resistance.
3. Observe whether any patterns can be discerned (themes, metaphors, repetitive actions).
4. Be prepared for the unexpected movements of the Spirit, 'deflections or breaks in rhythm' and see whether evidences of the fruits of the Spirit ('a new regime') appear.
5. Explore those influences ('disturbances') that break into the old patterns of life and that deepen the dialogue with God.

Of course, spiritual direction cannot be reduced to a set of steps or rules because it involves active and open listening to the story of another person. Nevertheless, like the geographer examining a landscape – the forces involved, the oscillations, the changes in the structure and even function, and the emergence of a new landscape – so too, in the 'landscape of the soul', the spiritual director is attentive to a person's emerging relationship with God within their particular context of life.

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[77] Henri J M Nouwen, 1989, *The Road to Daybreak*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 151.
[78] Richard T T Forman, 1986, *Landscape Ecology*, 458.

Change in a landscape is also related to the output of the system. Thus, in the example of the 'cabbage farm', the output was the cabbages on sale in the local market as well as the state of the farmland. Previously, I have suggested that the output of the 'landscape of the soul' is union with God in Christ. But this raises the question of 'What do you mean by 'union'?' Many phenomenological descriptions of union can be found in spiritual writings. For example, in the *Treatise on the Love of God*, Francis de Sales describes the union between God and the soul using the metaphor of adherence:

> But when the union of the soul with God is most especially strict and close, it is called by theologians inhesion or adhesion, because by it the soul is caught up, fastened, glued and affixed to the divine majesty, so that she cannot easily loose or draw herself back again.[79]

In this passage, the soul and God are so close that like being held by a powerful magnet, they cannot easily be parted. Hence, they are like two objects that are glued strongly together. Alternatively, in the *Book of Spiritual Instruction*, Blosius uses the image of immersion:

> In very truth the soul, immersed in God and absorbed into Him, swims, as it were, to and fro in the Godhead, and abounds with unspeakable joy which even overflows plenteously into the body. Now does the soul, itself, even in this exile, enjoy a foretaste of eternal life.[80]

In this account, the soul is immersed and contained in God. However described, union represents an intimate unity between God and the soul. Thus, Thomas Aquinas writes:

> The soul, in the preceding degrees, loves and is loved in return: she seeks and she is sought; she calls and is called. But in this, in an admirable and ineffable way, she lifts and is lifted up; she holds and is herself held; she clasps and she is closely embraced, and by the bond of love she unites herself with God, one with one, alone with Him.[81]

This last description of union echoes the embrace of lovers where there is a mutual self-giving in love. These excerpts indicate that experientially, union can be like being bound to God, immersed in God or embraced by God. However, these are

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[79] Francis de Sales quoted by Nelson Pike, 1992, *Mystic Union: An Essay in the Phenomenology of Mysticism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 8.
[80] Blosius quoted by Nelson Pike, 1992, *Mystic Union*, 8.
[81] Thomas Aquinas quoted by Augustin-François Poulain, 1910, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 109.

reports of a particular type of experience and earlier, I postulated that union might be conceived as a process that involves our actions.

In the Prologue to *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, John of the Cross pictures the soul travelling through the dark night towards 'that divine light of perfect union with God which is achieved, insofar as possible in this life, through love'.[82] For John of the Cross love is the spiritual virtue of the will, one of the three functions of the higher part of the soul.[83] If we return to the concept of the person as an agent, then it might be said that through our will, love informs our actions. Furthermore, through the grace of God in Jesus Christ, our actions of love can be incorporated into God's one action of love.[84] But it may be asked, 'How can we know that our choices and acts of love are in accord with God?

To address this question, it is necessary to look briefly at what has been called the discernment of spirits. The purpose of spiritual direction is to enable the person telling their story to attend to what is happening in their prayer and in their lives. Continuing with the model of the agent, it could be conjectured that when we act in accord with the one act of God, we will feel a sense of harmony or peace and conversely, where we experience a sense of division and disharmony, we are acting according to our own wills and are out of alignment with God.[85] However, to rely simply on feelings can be misleading if the context of our whole life is not taken into consideration as Ignatius of Loyola illustrated in his 'Rules for the Discernment of Spirits' in *The Spiritual Exercises*.[86] For example, although a person may experience a feeling of peace in prayer, a decision or in actions taken, this might indicate such psychological states as relief, suppression of conflicting emotions, or indifference

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[82] John of the Cross, 1991, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, Prologue: 1.

[83] The other functions are understanding and memory with their virtues of faith and hope, respectively. For an exposition of the John of the Cross' system of human psychology see, The Anatomy of the Soul in E W Trueman Dicken, 1963, *The Crucible of Love: A Study in the Mysticism of St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 327-351.

[84] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 222.

[85] William Barry makes the same observation from his reading and interpretation of John Macmurray. (William A Barry, 1992, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God*, New York: Paulist Press, 76-79.)

[86] Ignatius of Loyola, 1998, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans Anthony Mottola, New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, 129-134.

rather than the conforming of his or her will to God.[87]

Experiences need to be seen against the backdrop of the person's life, looking for relevant marks such as whether or not there is an increase in love and desire for God or a movement through one's actions towards God. It is at this point that the fruits of the Spirit enumerated by Paul – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – have traditionally been used as markers for evaluating the quality of spiritual life. Ignatius of Loyola observed that these virtues grow together and lead towards the centrality of God in a person's life.[88] Concomitant with this is a growth in simplicity where what was once held as important is seen in a new perspective characterised by a focus on God. This freedom and detachment as well as the affective experiences of consolation and desolation can act in the manner of positive feedback and hence foster an increased attentiveness to God and openness to the transformation process of being clothed in Christ (Gal. 3.27).

So, for both the geographer and spiritual director, change is a factor in their landscapes. However, this raises the question of whether it can be claimed that the geographer or the spiritual director are objective observers of change. Thus, we come to the issue of how we perceive our landscape. I began my exploration of the metaphor with an overall view of landscape as a system. I moved into a more detailed examination of landscape in relation to the three networks geology, geomorphology and ecology. This was followed by looking at landscape in terms of its characteristics of structure, function and change. Now, I am returning to a more comprehensive overview where, in the following sections, I will look at our perception of landscape as well as examine the model with reference to pilgrimage.

2.7 The Perception of Landscape

How do we perceive the landscape through which we move? What features are important? If we remember the example of Saint-Exupéry's maps, what was

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[87] William A Barry and William J Connolly, 1982, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 110-111.
[88] Ibid., 109-114.

considered significant and worth mapping differed between the cartographers and the aviators. The perception of landscape is influenced by presuppositions of the observer and by the resolution of viewing.

It might be argued that we believe what we see but it would possibly be more accurate to say that we see what we believe.[89] Contemporary geographers are drawing attention to the link between the observation of a landscape and the observer's presuppositions. Looking at a landscape has been likened to a 'visual ideology'.[90] Gillian Rose has developed a course for geography students that enables them to critically evaluate visual images. Through a series of questions related to the production of the image, to the image itself, and to those are looking (the audience), she highlights how what is seen is socially constructed.[91] Similarly, this connection between belief and what is considered important in a landscape is illustrated by early Christian sources in cartography. For example, the record of Egeria, a traveller to the Middle East in the fourth century describes the landscape only as far as it is connected to Old and New Testament events.[92] The influence of beliefs is also evident in the ambiguous relationship that existed between the Puritans and the American wilderness, where the landscape was described as a garden and a place of refuge as well as a demon filled wilderness, a place of 'eschatological combat'.[93] This suggests that relationship between how a landscape is perceived and represented is complex and may oscillate between contrasting beliefs.

Similarly, in pastoral care the stories that are told and what is heard in these stories is frequently related to beliefs of the story-teller and the listener. In his study on religious experience and childhood, Edward Robinson discusses how the environment, particularly, that of school can dampen religious awareness and expression. One correspondent observed:

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[89] Nelson Pike, 1992, *Mystic Union*, 94-102.
[90] Gillian Rose, 1993, *Feminism and Geography*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 87.
[91] Gillian Rose, 1996, Teaching Visualised Geographies: Towards a Methodology for the Interpretation of Visual Materials, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 20(3): 281-294.
[92] Blake Leyerle, 1996, Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64(1): 126-129.
[93] George Huntson Williams, 1959, The Wilderness and Paradise in the History of the Church, *Church History* 28: 8-16.

> I deliberately inhibited the inner life and became highly scientific in outlook, questioning my "hunches" at every turn, and learning to be silent about them. I would willingly have talked of the inner life, if the setting had seemed right...[94]

The person, in this example, consciously tried to interpret his or her experiences according to scientific beliefs. Depending on how successful the person was in this translation of experience, an experience of God could have been explained away in terms of something else. In describing his experience of grace, Thomas Merton asked: 'How do I know it was not merely my own imagination, or something that could be traced to a purely natural, psychological cause...?'[95] However, where certain theological beliefs are held, experiences may be described in images associated with these convictions. For example, when the thirteenth-century nun Beatrice of Nazareth had a vision, it was described in terms of the Trinity and the heavenly Jerusalem.[96]

In telling their stories, people use the language, beliefs and situations with which they are familiar. William Barry observed:

> While directing others on retreat, I noticed how different Jesus or God sounded when described by the retreatants. Sometimes he sounded like a truck driver with salty language, sometimes like a school teacher.[97]

Thus, the participants in spiritual direction may share a common horizon or shared vision, but at the same time, personal beliefs, which may be unconscious, and experiences, will modify the exchange. Sometimes, a spiritual director could be uncomfortable with certain types of experiences and hence these experiences in the person's story might be downplayed or remain unacknowledged. Consequently, the story-teller may cease to relate them. Thus, as in the geographer's perception of

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[94] Edward Robinson, 1977, *The Original Vision*, Oxford: The Religious Experience Research Unit, 86.
[95] Thomas Merton, 1947/1961, *The Seven Story Mountain*, London: Sheldon Press, 111.
[96] In her life, it was recorded:

> And she saw, not with [the faculties of] the body but with those of the intellect, with eyes not of the flesh but of the mind, the divine and sublime Trinity shining marvellously in the beauty of its splendour and the omnipotence of its eternal excellence. And she saw David with the singers of that heavenly Jerusalem magnificently praising the majesty of divine power on the lute and harp. She saw the throngs of holy spirits. (Jerome Kroll and Roger de Ganck, 1986, The Adolescence of a Thirteenth-century Visionary Nun, *Psychological Medicine* 16: 753.)

[97] William Barry quoted by Elizabeth Liebert, 1989, Eyes to See and Ears to Hear: Identifying Religious Experience in Pastoral Spiritual Guidance, *Pastoral Psychology*, 37(4): 306.

landscape, the 'landscape of the soul' that is presented or perceived is a construct shaped by numerous factors.

Landscape, as paintings reveal, can be viewed at different scales or resolutions. The spatial scale of a landscape may range from several hundred metres to several hundred kilometres. How the resolution of a landscape changes is demonstrated in a series of pictures of Edinburgh reproduced in Figure 2.61-d, found on pages 101-103. At a coarse resolution such as from a satellite, it may be possible to identify only a few general landscape elements. In the satellite scan of Edinburgh (Figure 2.6a), natural geomorphological features such as Arthur's Seat and Blackford Hill, and major human constructions such as the grid street system in the New Town can be distinguished. However, when the resolution is increased such as in the air photograph (Figure 2.6b), less area is covered but it is possible to see and identify more features. Thus, in this picture, Blackford Hill and the New Town are lost, but it is now possible to see the walkways across the Meadows and the Salisbury Crags on Arthur's Seat. In the fourth picture of Edinburgh, taken from Carlton Hill, buildings of the Old Town are clearly visible in the foreground of Salisbury Crags and Arthur's Seat (Figure 2.6c). Finally, at a small scale and high resolution, geological features are distinguishable as in the example of Hutton's Section on the Salisbury Crags (Figure 2.6d). As the resolution of a landscape increases the area that is perceived diminishes in size but detail is augmented. Thus, the resolution at which the system is examined influences the boundaries of the landscape and the attributes that can be effectively described.

Similarly, in spiritual direction, a movement can occur between different levels of attention and interpretation (Figure 2.7, on page 104). Although in spiritual direction the primary focus is upon God, sometimes attention will shift to the person because if the whole person is heard, all levels of being are engaged: the biological, the psychological, the social and the spiritual. Sometimes in order to understand a person's story, it is necessary to focus on elements involved with physiology or psychology as in a severe illness or bereavement. In terms of the metaphorical model, attention is being given to the geological network that is being manifest through the patches that are unique to that person. At other times, such as when listening to children or adolescents, a person's story is told against the backdrop of

geomorphological features associated with a particular stage of psycho-spiritual development. Alternatively, attention can be comprehensive involving the evaluation of the fruits of the Spirit in the context of a person's life. Here, in the metaphor, the concern is with the whole system 'landscape of the soul' in terms of its structure (matrix, patches and corridors), function (input-transformation) and change (output). Although the focus on God is central in spiritual direction, interpretative movement can occur between different levels.

Like a physical landscape, the 'landscape of the soul' can be viewed at different resolutions. However, regardless of the resolution, a general framework of the model can be perceived.

2.8 The Model of the 'Landscape of the Soul'

The 'landscape of the soul' can be visualised as a system of systems encompassing the whole of a person's life. Therefore, a religious dimension cannot be wholly separated from daily life. The elements or subsystems of this landscape system can form networks such as a geology of experiencing, a geomorphology of growing and an ecology of relating which interact with each other, modifying and influencing the landscape as a whole. In addition, the landscape can be described through its characteristics of structure, function and change.

If this model were to be figuratively represented, one could imagine the different networks of systems intersecting as in Figure 2.8, found on page 105. In the area of overlap, a distinctive 'landscape of the soul' emerges characterised by its own pattern of patches and corridors within the common matrix of which the person is a part. Here, God who is both immanent and transcendent interacts with and transforms a person through the activity of love.

In the model, the 'landscape of the soul', two features can be viewed: the structure of the landscape and the processes occurring within that landscape. Thus, in spiritual direction, the structure of a person's life is important. This involves awareness of the background matrix in a person's life, the individual patches whether these are physical, psychological or social, and those corridors of communication with God and also with others. Given the structure of the landscape, attention is

directed towards the processes: the encounter and response to God, the transformations in love manifested in the changes that are occurring, and the patterns of relationship with God that are emerging. Both the structure and the processes are necessary if the landscape is to be seen as a whole system. Thus, in spiritual direction, the landscape model involves the totality of a person's life in the process of discernment.[98]

In Chapter 1, I adopted the Pauline tenet that spiritual life was a conforming of one's life to the Spirit of God. As such, it was suggested that Christian spirituality is an activity rather than a state of being. In its varies dimensions, the model of the 'landscape of the soul' reflects some of the characteristics associated with Christian spirituality. For example, Christian spirituality concerns the whole of a person's life such as the sacred and the secular, the physical and the non-physical, and the individual and the communal. Based on the concept of landscape as a '*synthetic* space', I proposed that the 'landscape of the soul' emerged from the intersection from all of Checkland's systems and therefore, the model is embodied in a particular historical time and space.[99] Several relational elements were elaborated in the model. In the structure of a landscape corridors could facilitate communication. Functionally, the landscape could be described as arising from God's call and the soul's response. The dynamics of spiritual life are represented in the transformational activity associated with the function of the landscape. The model of the 'landscape of the soul' emphasises the uniqueness of each person. Furthermore, when an analogy with landscape change is drawn, the model highlights the attentiveness required in discerning the transforming moments of grace in a person's life.

Like Saint-Exupéry's first map, the model that has been constructed is a general representation of the 'landscape of the soul'. Nevertheless, it depicts a complex and elaborate map of a system. Since, systems are practical constructs, it could be queried whether such a model has any advantages that might commend its use in pastoral care. In the first chapter, I drew attention to landscape as a backdrop

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[98] William A Barry and William J Connolly, 1982, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 41-42; Rowan Williams, 1990, *The Wound of Knowledge*, 2.
[99] J B Jackson, 1986, The Vernacular Landscape, in *Landscape Meanings and Values*, 68.

for the model of pilgrimage. In the following section, I will look more closely at the pilgrimage model in conjunction with the model of the 'landscape of the soul' in order to highlight some of the limitations and advantages of the latter.

2.9 THE LANDSCAPE MODEL COMPARED WITH THE METAPHOR OF PILGRIMAGE

Whether for describing life in general or more specifically, spiritual life, pilgrimage is a common motif that may be found in our songs and our stories. For example, there is an old Spiritual from the American south that begins with the words:

> I'm just a way, wayfaring stranger
> A travelin' through this vale of woe
> But there's no sickness, toil nor danger
> To that bright world to which I go
> I'm going there to see my Maker.
> I'm going' there no more to roam.
> I'm just'a goin' over Jordan.
> I'm just'a goin' over home.[100]

In this song, arising out of the harshness and pain of slavery, the years of wandering in the wilderness by the Israelites is echoed through the allusion to the crossing over of the Jordan River. Here, the image of wayfaring can bring to mind a network of associations. For example, there is the connection with the wilderness. Associations with homelessness, poverty and suffering can be made. In addition, there is the sense of movement towards an end point or goal, the Promised Land, and identification with the Israelites, as the people of God. This song of being a wanderer is representative of a model based on mobility of which the nomad, the traveller, the pilgrim, the migrant or the exile are types. Although in the following, I speak of the pilgrim and the model of pilgrimage, the wider model of mobility is implicated.

The journey of the pilgrim can be used to represent the process of Christian growth with the goal of journey being union with God.[101] In the model of pilgrimage, the pilgrimage represents a passage through time that takes place in a metaphorical

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[100] This is a traditional Negro Spiritual that has been taken from an oral tradition found North America.
[101] For example, see John Welch, 1982, *Spiritual Pilgrims*, New York: Paulist Press.

space. For example, in spiritual life, people encounter periods of aridity when God appears distant and the whole enterprise of prayer fruitless. These times can be compared to a physical desert or wilderness where the essence of life is focused on survival. Thus, our metaphorical deserts can represent times during which our conceptions of God or old habits of life and prayer are stripped away. In the pilgrimage model, it is possible to image travelling through desert areas, climbing mountains, crossing seas or being lost in forests because these activities can correspond to experiences in physical landscapes. Thus, the metaphor of pilgrimage allows for the changes that occur in spiritual life and describes these through different landscape features.

Although it would probably be easy for most people to picture themselves as pilgrims, to imagine themselves as a landscape might be problematic and uncomfortable, particularly if they perceived themselves in terms of inhospitable or unhabitable places. With the model of the 'landscape of the soul', the spiritual director, like the geographer, is confronted with a particular landscape. As it was seen, a landscape could be examined through its structure, function and change. For example, in a desert, part of the landscape structure may be a pattern of patches in the form of oases or water holes. With infrequent periods of rain, a network of ecological relationships, which are usually hidden or dormant, may spring up. A pattern of corridors such as trade routes may act a links of communication. Although humans may not leave an imprint on this landscape, they could live in relation to it via particular trade or migration routes. Perhaps in spiritual direction, the 'landscape of the soul' is like a desert that appears to be totally hostile to the movements of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, for the spiritual director, the task is to attend to this landscape by being present with this person.

The lives of some people do present spiritual directors with inhospitable landscapes. For the last 18 months of her life, Thérèse of Lisieux existed in a 'night of nothingness'.[102] It could be conceived that metaphorically the landscape of her soul was a hostile, waste place. The examination of her life through the model of the 'landscape of the soul' might be a useful exercise in an exploration of the

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[102] Noel O'Donoghue, 1989, *Mystics For Our Time*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 122.

existential angst that can be encountered in pastoral care today.[103]

The principles of landscape geography were developed under northern European influences. Here, the image of landscape tends to be a composite of environmental and human systems such as in agriculture. Although it is possible to conceive the metaphorical landscape as an inhospitable wilderness, this model has not been developed from the perspective of those living at the extremes physically or spiritually. Nevertheless, acknowledging this limitation, the model of landscape might be useful when the wilderness experience in spiritual life is not a stage through which a person is seen to be travelling, but is the continual life of the person. In this respect, the landscape model with its emphasis on the present moment has an advantage over the pilgrimage model.

In science and philosophy, there is a principle known as 'Ockham's razor', named after the fourteenth century Franciscan, William of Ockham. Although he did not formulate it, the maxim 'Entities are not to be multiplied without necessity' has become associated with him.[104] However, he did suggest that when several explanations for something are available, it was wise to choose the simplest. If this principle is applied to the two models of pilgrimage or landscape, it can be seen that pilgrimage is simpler and easier to describe and comprehend. Its unfamiliarity and complexity limit the model of the 'landscape of the soul'. In addition, to be mobile as a pilgrim, wayfarer or exile, is a possible human activity, to be a landscape is not. This is particularly true if landscape is understood as purely natural and the human element is removed. In this respect, it could be argued that the homesteader or resident is a more appropriate model with which to contrast that of the pilgrim. Notwithstanding the fact that the definition of landscape that has been used takes into account an element of human activity, the model still assumes familiarity with landscape geography, a familiarity that spiritual directors can not be assumed to possess.

Earlier I drew attention to the claim by Janet Soskice that 'it is the capacity of the lively metaphor to suggest models that enable us to "go on"...'.[105] Both the

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[103] Noel O'Donoghue, 1989, *Mystics For Our Time*, 122.
[104] Bertrand Russell, 1961, *History of Western Philosophy*, London: Routledge, 462.
[105] Janet Martin Soskice, 1985, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 51, 95.

models of pilgrimage and of landscape provide a framework for understanding and interpreting the stories of people, individually or communally as the Body of Christ. In this respect, the models are static and can be used to situate certain preconceived ideas about Christian life. However, both models also represent an on-going activity of growth, and elements from their respective paradigms can be used to draw out, illustrate and elaborate these processes. Therefore, both models have the potential to depict the dynamism of spiritual life.

The pilgrim model provides a rich source of imagery taken from elements in the landscape and from aspects of travel. Thus, landscape features can be used to represent aspect or processes in spiritual life. For instance, sin could be seen as a chasm (c.f. C S Lewis) and growth in prayer as climbing a mountain (c.f. John of the Cross). In addition, other networks of associations can be developed. For example, a pilgrim can meet a wise guide on the journey. Thus, in *The Divine Comedy*, Dante was guided by Virgil to the earthly paradise. In pastoral care, the person who accompanies another on his/her faith journey is seen as a companion or guide. In his book, *Prophetic Pastoral Practice*, Gerkin refers to the pastor as an 'interpretive guide'[106]. In addition, the writings of the Christian mystics are increasingly being used as maps depicting the stages and signposts of spiritual growth and development. Hence, images associated with travel such as signposts, guides, companions, way stations and maps can be used metaphorically as well as natural and human created features of the physical landscape.

Like the model of pilgrimage, landscape can be extended through the metaphorical elaboration of its various elements, such as structure, function and change as well as elemental networks such as a geology of experiencing, a geomorphology of growing and an ecology of relating. Nevertheless there are points where processes in the natural world cannot be stretched to be representative of spiritual life because of the possibility of human choice.[107] In this respect, the model of pilgrimage can be seen to be more effective.

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[106] Charles V Gerkin, 1991, *Prophetic Pastoral Practice: a Christian Vision of Life Together*, Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon, 67.

[107] Macmurray, argues that organic metaphors are inadequate to describe human life because human life involves intention and choice as concomitant with action. (John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 45ff.)

2. Model

Metaphors and models act as filters of information and influence the questions and observations that are made of a situation. It is possible to describe some phenomena with complementary models and in this way, derive a more comprehensive understanding of the situation. Landscape can be associated with two distinct models: pilgrimage and landscape. Are these models in competition with each other in an either/or situation? Or, are these models complementary in a both/and scenario?

Pilgrimage provides a dynamic model of Christian growth. It is a relatively straightforward model in that it draws upon the human experience of being mobile beings. With this model, the placelessness of Christian life is emphasised in the movement towards the eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God. However, it is possible that pilgrimage can become over futuristic and lose touch with present realities. Prominent in this model is the idea of a goal or destination. Inherent in the concept of a goal is the danger that the focus of the individual or community may be displaced from God to monitoring the progress of the journey towards the end point.[108] Under these circumstances, Christian life as a relationship to be lived is transformed into a goal to be achieved. Moreover, this goal can become confused with various subjective states. Thus, as I observed in Chapter 1, there is a need for a model that focuses upon the encounter with God in the present moment and within which it is possible to situate different subjective states if they occur.

The pilgrim model can encourage dualistic thinking with a spiritual 'I' contrasted against the physical and material world represented by landscape.[109] Also associated with the pilgrim model are a variety of disclaimers such as 'I am not good (worthy or smart) enough for God's love'.[110] Not only is the coming of the Kingdom placed in the future but so too, is the possibility of a life lived in union with God. Finally, because this model is closely linked with human development, children and

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[108] It is useful at the level of the individual and at the level of the community as the people of God. Although, the examples given in this paper are drawn from the pastoral care of individuals, when house groups or congregations, as a whole, re-examine their commitments and direction, they often view themselves in terms of the pilgrim model. Hence, at the individual and congregational level, this pilgrim model is extended through associated images and adapted to particular states of affairs.
[109] Margaret R Miles, 1988, *The Image and Practice of Holiness*, 51-52.
[110] William A Barry and William J Connally, 1982, 31-45; Alan Jones, 1982, *Exploring Spiritual Direction: An Essay on Christian Friendship*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 65.

those with mental disabilities can be excluded because they do not conform to the stages of prayer or psycho-spiritual growth that are depicted in the spiritual journey. In these circumstances, an alternative model that focuses on the encounter with the love of God in the present moment is required to complement that of the pilgrim travelling towards a union with God in the future. It is under these circumstances that the landscape model might be found as a useful approach for interpreting Christian spiritual life.

As we have seen, the 'landscape of the soul' is a complex model that involves all aspects of human life. The spiritual director, like a geographer, is confronted with a landscape in all its complexity. During the process of discernment, a director may need to draw attention to a person's practices of sleep deprivation or fasting, elements related to the network of a geology of experiencing. At other times, a person's story is told against the backdrop of a geomorphology of growing associated with a particular stage of psycho-spiritual development. Alternatively, attention may be directed to corridors of communication through which God is encountered. Although there is an interplay between the structural elements in a landscape, these characteristics of landscape highlight that people encounter God as they are, in the present situation.

The dynamics of spiritual life can be seen through the landscape characteristics of function and change. With function and change, the focus is upon the process of encounter with God in the present moment and through this, the potential transformation in a spiral of love. It is a premise that God's self-revelation is available to all of humankind. Therefore, if each individual is seen in terms of a landscape, then the weakest and youngest are included in the model of the 'landscape of the soul'.

It could be conjectured that a holistic approach in spiritual direction will take into account the paradoxes that are found in Christian life. The Kingdom of God is 'not yet' and union with God is in the future and at the same time, the Kingdom is 'within', we have been united to Christ through Baptism. Moreover, as we continue to encounter God and to align our actions with God's action, we can potentially be united to God in the present moment. A tension exists between the wanderer with no abiding home and the Incarnation, the revelation of the sacred in

time and space.[111] Within these paradoxes, the model of the pilgrim is complemented by the model of landscape. Whereas the metaphoric model of pilgrimage is concerned with the eschatological vision of the coming of the Kingdom of God, the landscape model involves the recognition of the Kingdom in the here and now of present reality. Both models illustrate aspects of spiritual life – detachment and vision in the pilgrimage model and self-awareness and acceptance of the present moment in landscape model. The model of pilgrimage suggests the transient element of Christian life as it is lived towards the Kingdom of God. The model of the 'landscape of soul' focuses on the current experience of God's self-revelation. Thus, in combining both the future and the present, these models provide a holistic way of viewing the stories that are told in spiritual direction.

Saint-Exupéry started with a general map of Spain and with the help of Guillaument, he was able to chart such details as 'the farmer, the thirty sheep, the brook'.[112] Thus, he was able to move from an abstract representation of the landscape to a more detailed depiction. Throughout this chapter, I have explored the metaphor, the 'landscape of the soul'. However, like Saint-Exupéry's original map, I have developed the model at the general level of spiritual life. The model presented in this chapter is like a representational type of map. As a system, my concern has been with landscape structure, function and with change.

In the following chapter, I propose to explore the model in more detail by looking at some of the different understandings of mysticism. I identify three types of ways in which mysticism can be interpreted and I suggest how these might be situated within the model. Thus, Chapter 3 provides an example of thematic mapping in the 'landscape of the soul'. However, this exploration is still at an abstract, general level and therefore, it remains part of the reflective dimension in the pastoral cycle.

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[111] Belden C Lane, 1992, Landscape and Spirituality: A Tension between Place and Placelessness in Christian Thought, *The Way Supplement* 78: 5.
[112] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1940, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, 8, 9.

2.10 Summary of Chapter Two: Creating a Model Using Landscape as a Metaphor

In this chapter, I began by defining landscape. I examined spiritual life as a system and from the perspective of the structure, function and change in a landscape. I drew attention to the limitations of a landscape model with respect to the metaphors of mapping and the pilgrim. In addition, I have highlighted the strengths of the model and how it may complement that of pilgrimage.

Landscape is evocative of many images. In this thesis, drawing upon the medieval understanding as well as that found in contemporary geography and ecology, I define landscape as a composite of natural and human systems. Therefore, I conceive landscape as a network of interacting systems.

The metaphor of landscape provides a particular framework through which spiritual life can be observed and provides a network of associations such as maps, roads, geology, etc. that can be extended to describe this life. The model that is generated in this chapter is like a representational map, in that it is very general.

Systems thinking informs my treatment of landscape, which I consider as an open system with inputs, transformations and outputs. Peter Checkland proposes a systems typology consisting of five types of systems: natural, designed physical, designed abstract, human activity and transcendental. I claim that a 'landscape of the soul' represents the emergence into human consciousness of interrelationship with God: that is, in Checkland's terminology, the interaction between the transcendental system and the human-environment network of systems.

Landscape can be described with reference the factors of structure, function and change as well as to the different subsystems that interact to comprise the landscape system as a whole. I began to elaborate the model by discussing three subsystems: a geology of experiencing, a geomorphology of growing and an ecology of relating. At the level of the geology of experiencing, the concern is with the physiological and psychological components fundamental to human experience. However, it was also noted that these processes are in varying degrees, dependent upon wider socio-cultural factors. The geomorphology of a landscape was linked with those changes occurring over a region as well as with the development of

particular landforms. Metaphorically, analogies were drawn with psycho-spiritual development theories and stages in prayer, respectively. Ecologically, God's love was compared to background radiation. However, when the tropic-dynamic model was extended, it collapsed because of the existence of human choice in the system. I suggested that the metaphorical network of ecological relationships could be approached more effectively through emergent features of landscape.

The emergent properties in the structure of landscape are the matrix, patches and corridors. The matrix is the most predominant element in a landscape and I have likened this to the socio-economic, temporal and spatial background of a person. Patches are those areas that differ from the matrix. In the model, patches represent that which is characteristic to a particular individual. In a landscape, corridors facilitate movement and communication throughout the system and its network of ecological relationships. I have linked corridors with the process of communication, specifically the encounter with God.

The function of a landscape refers to the dynamics of the system. I studied the overall function of the landscape in terms of its input, God's self-revelation through Jesus Christ, and the transformational process that can occur if a person chooses to respond to God. Thus, the 'landscape of the soul' could be depicted as a dynamic process initiated and sustained by God's love whereby a person's life is transformed into conformity with the life of God.

Change can be examined structurally in terms of stages in prayer or in psycho-spiritual life. However, it can also be related to the output of the landscape system, which I suggested is union with God in Christ. Although union can be described as a particular type of experience, using the concept of a person as an agent, I proposed that union could be seen dynamically as the harmony of our actions of love with God's one action of love.

In comparison with the pilgrim model, it is evident that the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is limited because of its unfamiliarity and complexity. Whereas mobility is integral to human experiencing, being a landscape is not. Nevertheless, I posited that landscape could provide a complementary metaphor to pilgrimage. Whereas pilgrimage focuses on a goal and is eschatological, landscape centres on the encounter with God *in situ*. Moreover, when the goal of the

pilgrimage becomes linked with subjective states, people can be excluded who do not have these experiences. Therefore, because each person can be considered as a landscape in which 'the life movement of the Spirit is expressed', the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is inclusive and can provide an alternative to the pilgrimage model.[113]

Spiritual direction occurs within a context that extends beyond the particular meetings between the director and directee. Therefore, a useful model in spiritual direction will allow movement between the general and the specific. That is, it will be able to integrate the wider horizon as well as the particular circumstances relating to the individual. It follows that if a model based on the 'landscape of the soul' is to be useful in spiritual direction, it will need to be flexible.

In this part of the pastoral cycle, I am involved in developing and exploring a hypothetical model based on landscape. Therefore, mapping is general and corresponds to the first set of Saint-Exupéry's maps. Consequently, the model that has been generated in this chapter is abstract. Similarly, in Chapter 3, where I will thematically map some of the different types of mysticism, the model is still at a general level. However, in Part Three of this thesis, I return to the practical situation. Therefore, in Chapter 4 where the model is examined in relation to the life and writings of Clare of Assisi, mapping moves from the general to the specific and individual.

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[113] J G Lubbock, 1990, *Landscapes of the Soul*, 37.

Figure 2.1 A Simple Open System

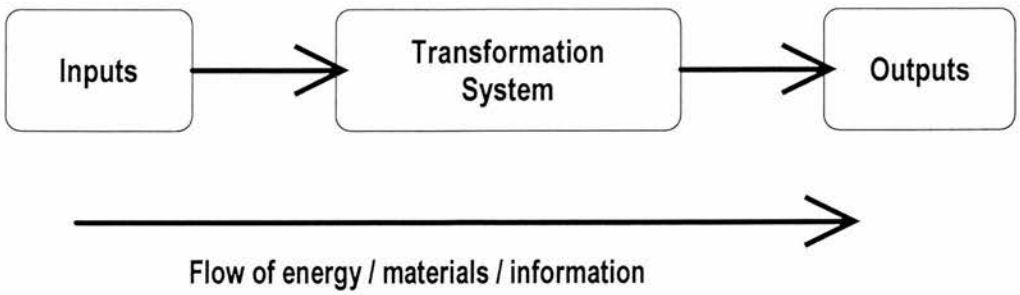


Figure 2.2 The Checkland Typology of Systems

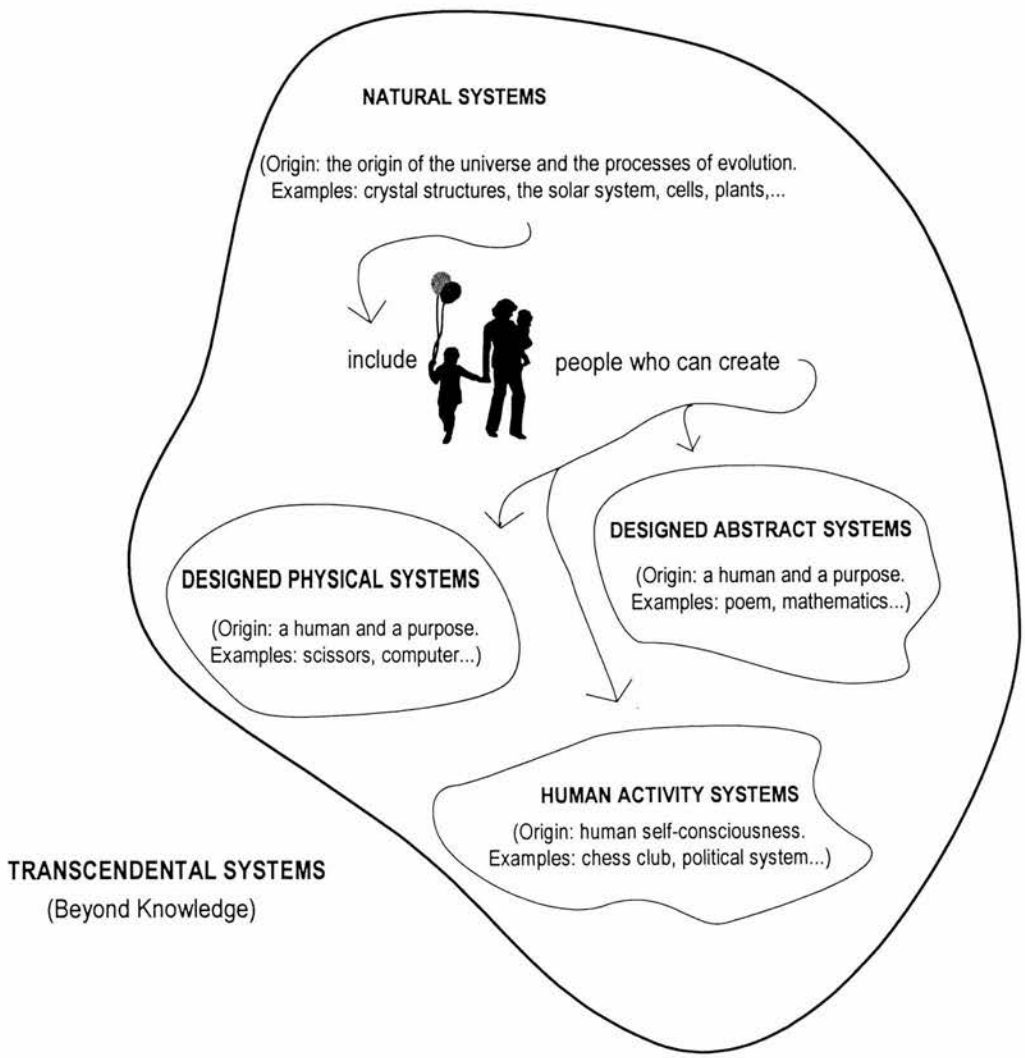


Figure 2.3 Elements in a Landscape

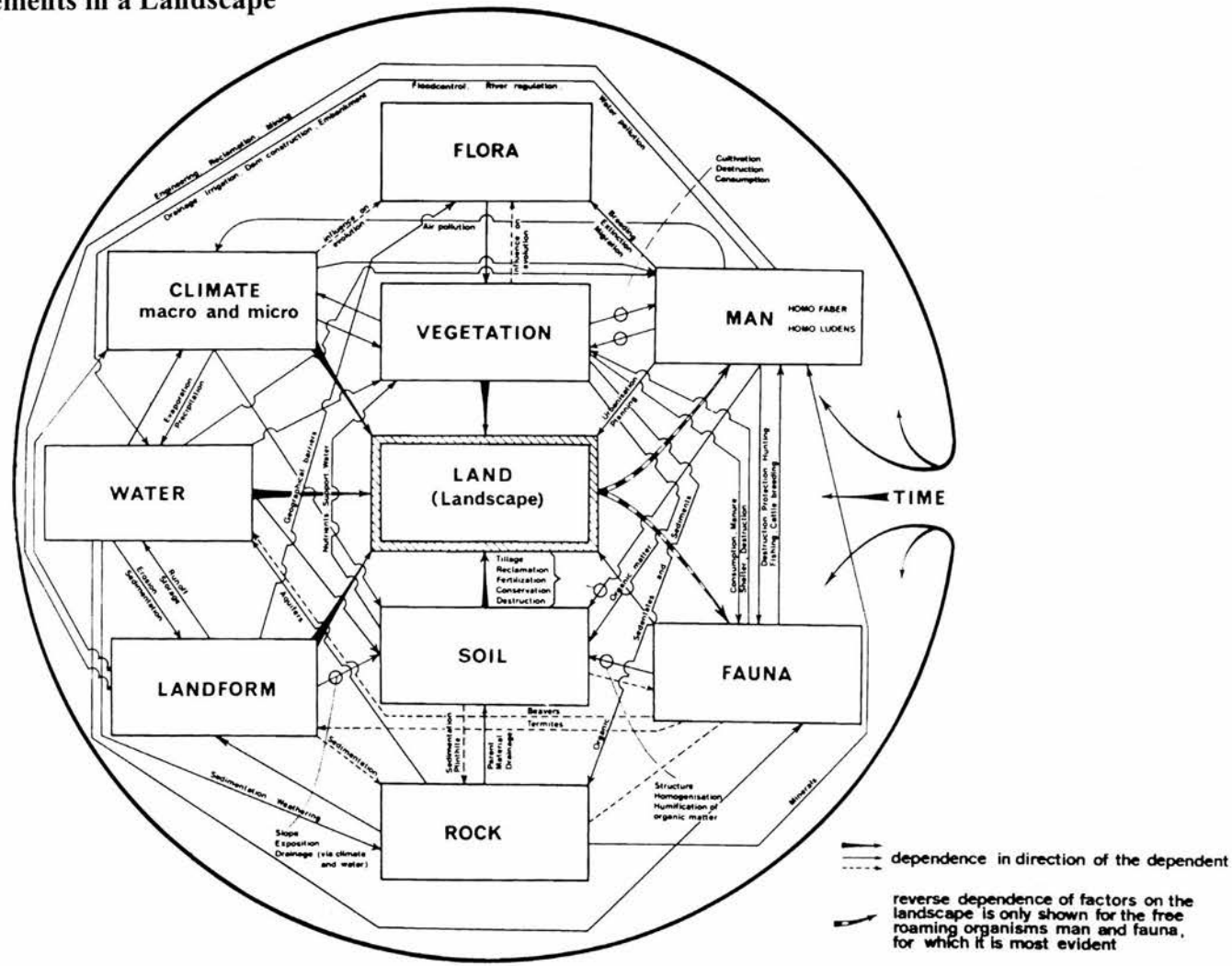


Figure 2.4 Elements in the 'Landscape of the Soul'

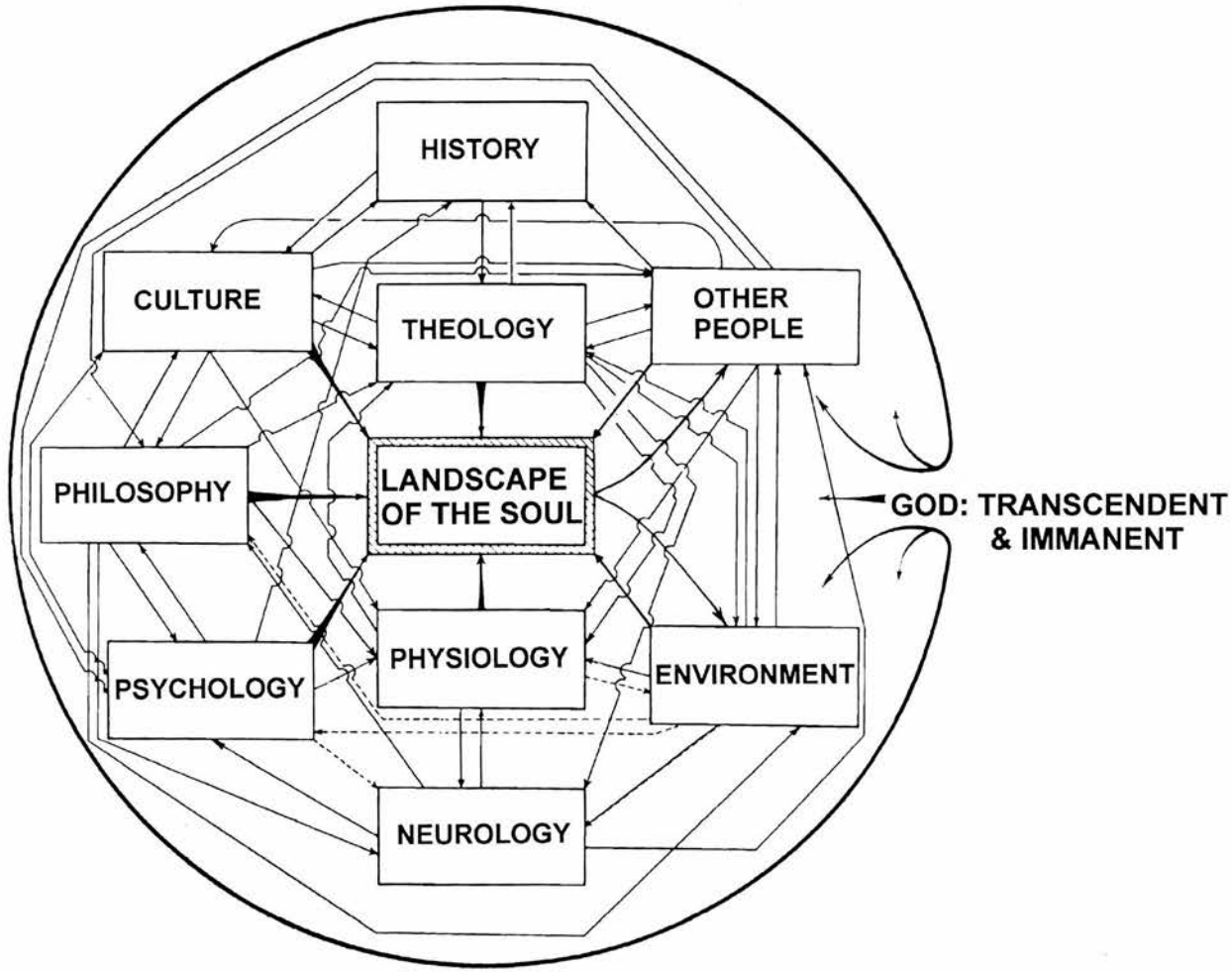
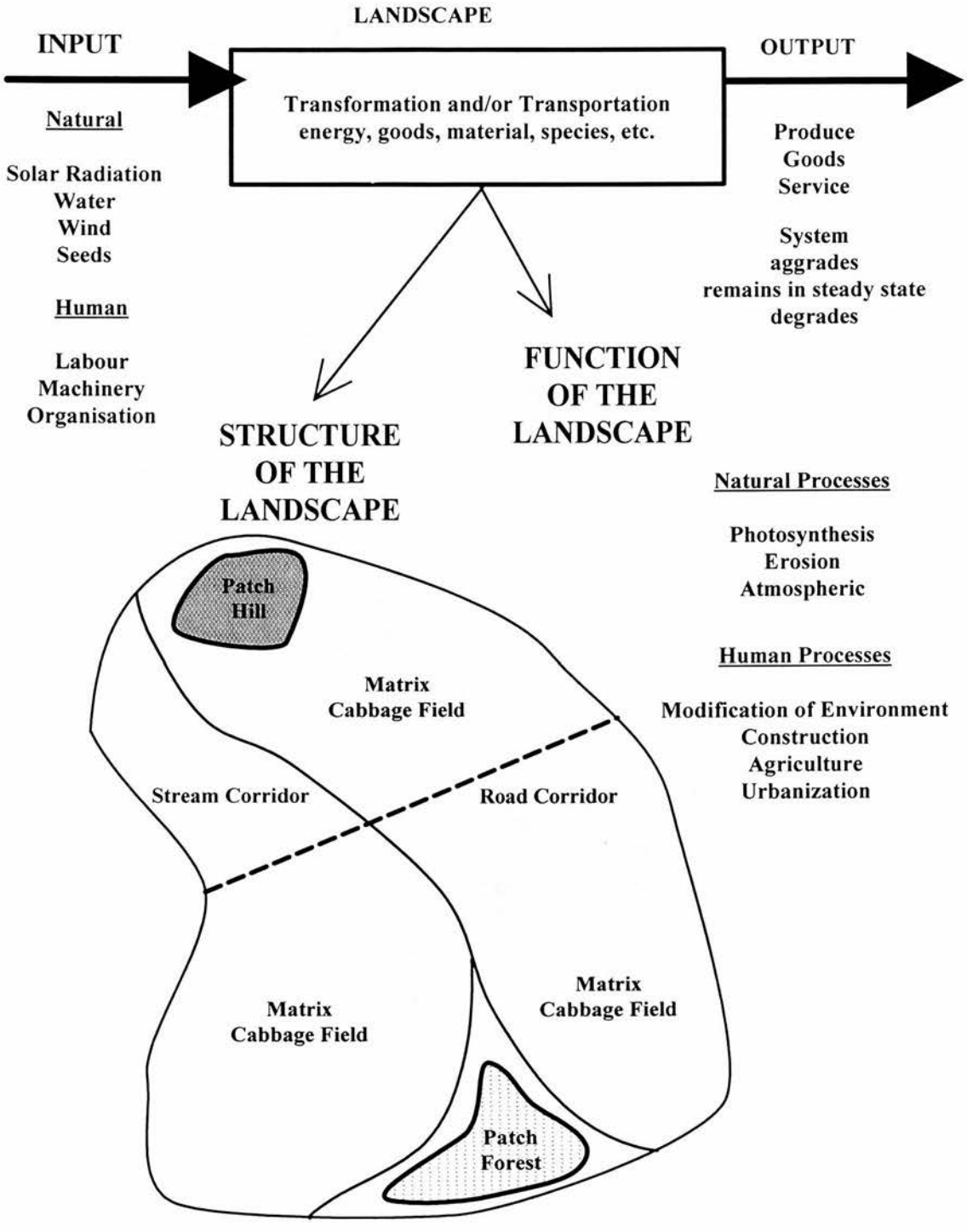


Figure 2.5 A Landscape System



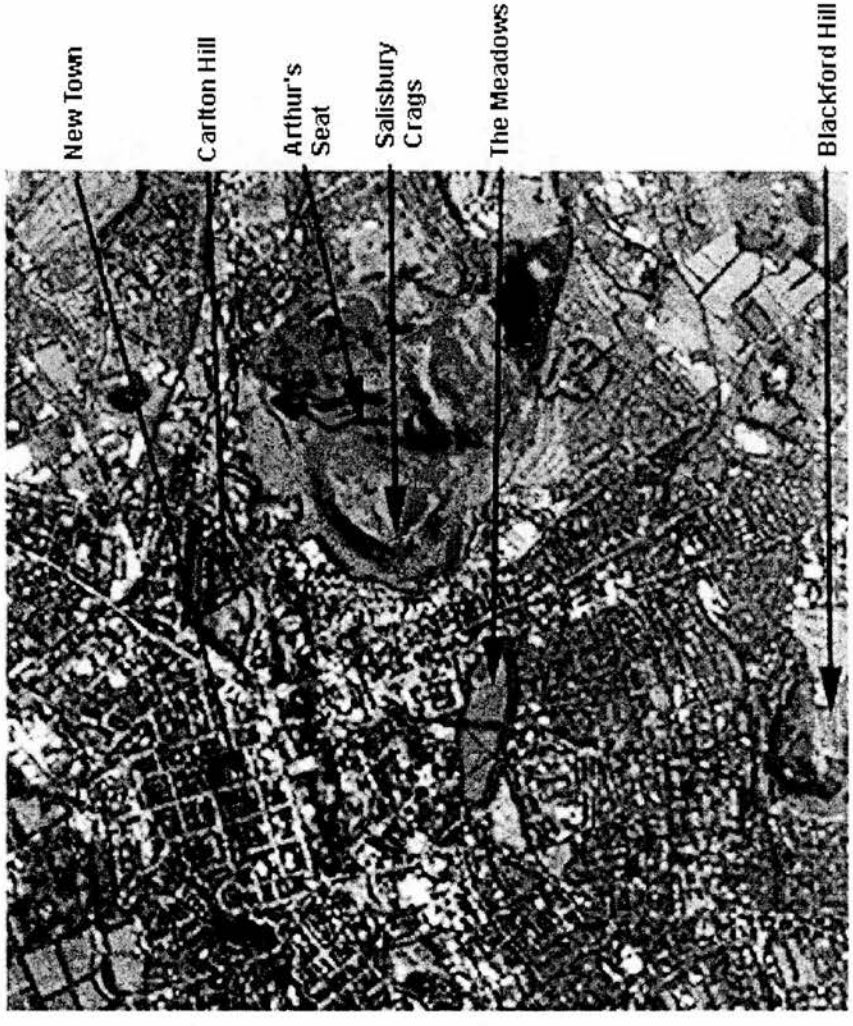


Figure 2.6a Resolution of a Landscape: Edinburgh Satellite Scan

Figure 2.6b Resolution of a Landscape: Edinburgh Air Photograph

Figure 2.6c Resolution of a Landscape: Arthur's Seat

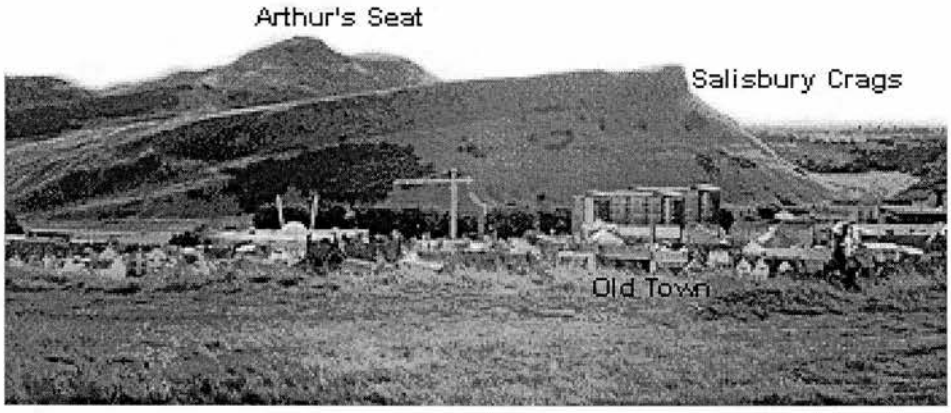


Figure 2.6d Resolution of a Landscape: Hutton's Section

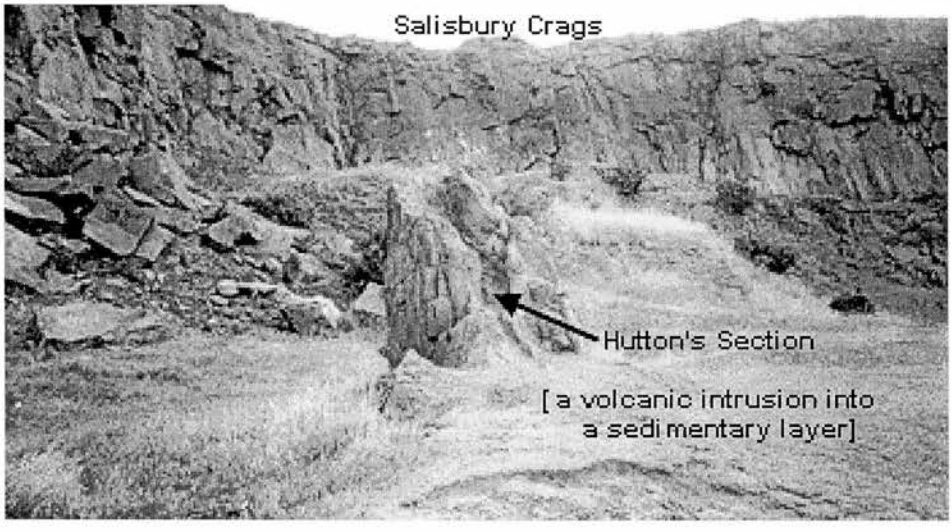
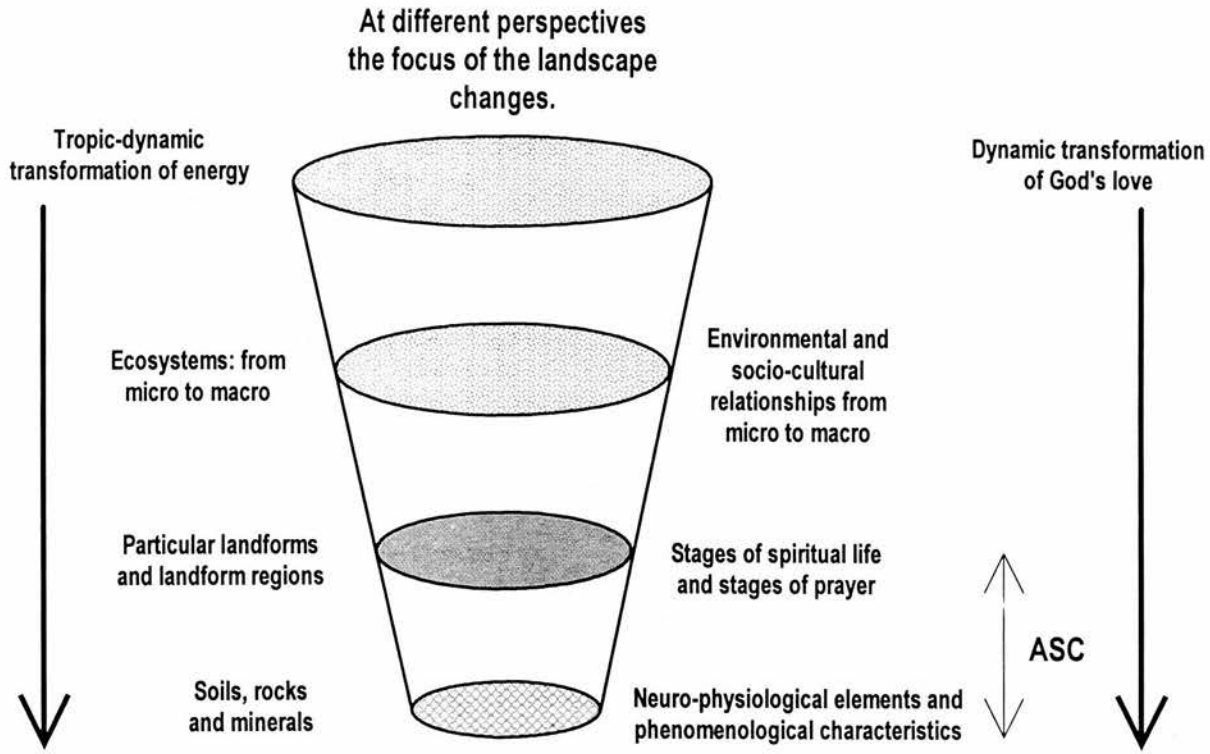


Figure 2.7 Resolution in the 'Landscape of the Soul'



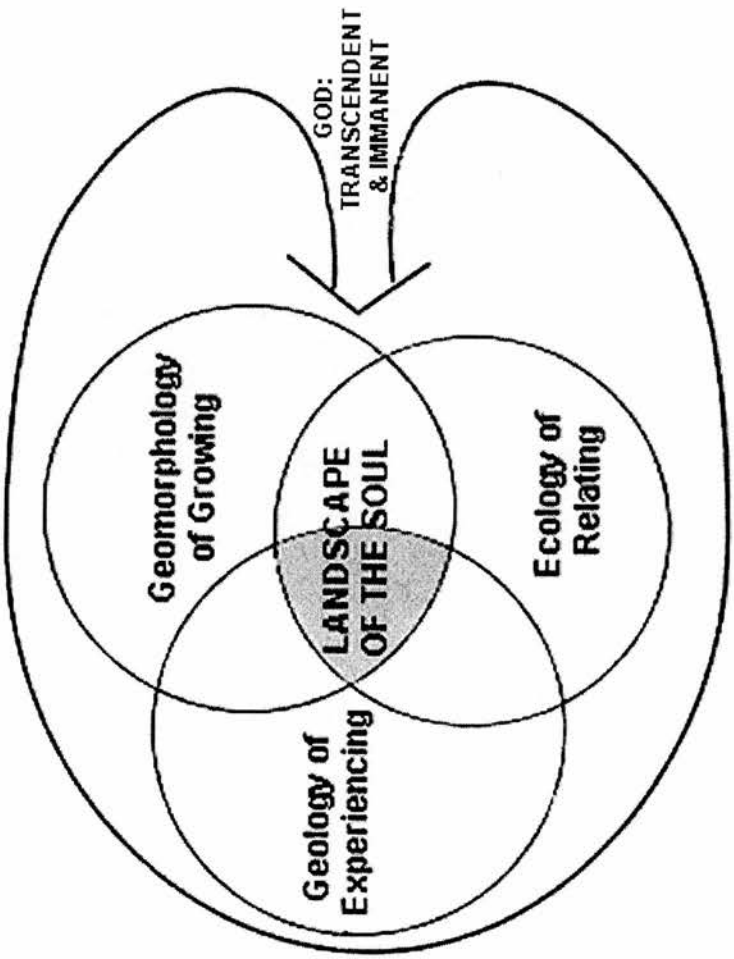


Figure 2.8 Model of the 'Landscape of the Soul'

3 THEMATIC MAPPING OF THREE INTERPRETATIONS OF MYSTICISM

This chapter forms a continuation of the reflective phase of the pastoral cycle initiated in Chapter 2. In Chapter 1, I highlighted a problem that can arise within the model of pilgrimage. Here the goal of Christian life, seen as union with God, can become associated with altered states of consciousness. Furthermore, the attainment of these states may eclipse the focus of attention on God. Union with God introduces the wider issue of Christian mysticism.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine, from the perspective of the landscape model, three different types of ways that mysticism can be interpreted. Our understanding of mysticism is important because it reflects our conception of Christian spiritual life. For example, if mysticism is equated with union with God and if union with God becomes identified with subjective experiences, then it is possible in spiritual direction to overlook union where such experiences are absent.[1] Therefore, our presuppositions in spiritual direction may influence how we listen to the stories of others.[2]

I will begin this chapter with a brief look at some conceptions of mysticism that it is possible to encounter in spiritual direction and in popular literature. From these examples, I will identify three different types of ways in which mysticism can be understood.[3] Based on particular characteristics within each of the examples, I will link these with the landscape networks that I postulated in Chapter 2. Then, using these networks, I will examine the different understandings of mysticism with reference to landscape structure, function and change.

This chapter continues the general mapping or representation of the model. However, I have selected the theme of mysticism and hence this chapter provides a

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[1] Ruth Burrows reports this experience in Guidelines to Mystical Prayer, 1-8.
[2] Janet Ruffing, 1989, *Uncovering Stories of Faith*, 50-61.
[3] The conception of the mystical that can be found in the context of spiritual direction may draw upon discourses from different historical times and places and be used sychronically in the formation of the spiritual life of a person. Therefore, in the construction of the landscape model, the literature, which is reviewed, is used thematically in order to illustrate this diversity of ideas that may be present at any one time in spiritual direction.

thematic mapping of the model of the 'landscape of the soul'. I hypothesise that the metaphor of landscape will enable us to appreciate the different conceptions linked with the mystical and to situate them holistically in our understanding of spiritual life.

3.1 Syncretistic Conceptions of Mysticism Found in Some Popular Literature

One day, an undergraduate student came to me exuberant because she had had a mystical experience.[4] She was versed in New Age ideas and literature, as well as readings in the Christian mystics and consequently she knew the signs of mystical union. She had merged with Ultimate Reality: she had experienced union with God. As we discussed this experience, it became evident that, for her, Christian mysticism was a particular type of altered state of consciousness.

The story of the undergraduate illustrates a phenomenon that is occurring in parts of contemporary western society. Increasingly, there are people searching for meaning and contact with a reality considered holy or sacred.[5] Interiority is being experientially explored through meditative techniques, hypnosis and drugs.[6] Influenced by the human potential movement and eastern philosophies and concomitant with the philosophical debates about the nature of mysticism, it is possible that eclectic concepts of mysticism are created.

It is important to explore the different understandings of mysticism because these concepts can influence the process of spiritual direction. Depending upon exposure to various ideas through different types of media or participation in such events as Mind/Body/Spirit exhibitions or meditation groups, the participants in spiritual direction may have formed widely differing understandings of Christian

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[4] This experience occurred in my work as spiritual director.

[5] Gabriel J Fackre, 1971, Going East: Neomysticism and the Christian Faith, *Christian Century*, 88: 457. An example of this trend can be observed in that it is commercially viable for mail order companies such as Mind, Body and Spirit, in Swindon and Cygnus Book Club, in Llandeilo, to specifically cater to a readership interested in a wide range of books which are deemed to be meet 'spiritual' needs. Thus, you find books such as the three volumes of *Sermons and Treatises* by Meister Eckhart being sold alongside *Light on Enlightenment*, a practical book on achieving Buddhist enlightenment (Cygnus Book Club, *Review*, October 1998, 11).

[6] Gabriel J Fackre, 1971, Going East, 458.

mysticism. Whereas one person may perceive mystical experiences as common, another may believe that only a special class of people is privileged to have such experiences. Or one person may conceive mysticism as a particular type of altered state of consciousness, whilst another may think in terms of a contemplative vision of life. In listening to the stories of others, it is possible to detect many threads and different shades of meaning and expectations. Robert M Gimello observes that mysticism:

> Has come to be viewed as a repository of all that is best and still admirable in religion but one that is free from such no longer acceptable elements as dogma, authority, discipline, respect for tradition, etc.[7]

Syncretistic conceptions about mysticism, created through choice of 'all that is best and still admirable in religion' can be found in popular literature about spirituality, in popular conceptions about religious experience, and even among Christian spiritual directors as I demonstrate through the survey I conducted.[8]

To begin the thematic mapping of the model in this chapter, I want to draw attention to some concepts of mysticism found in three examples of popular literature. This is the type of literature that can provide a formative source of information for people's understanding of mysticism, as in the case of the student, and even for those involved in Christian spiritual direction. The texts illustrate the presence or absence of some conceptions of mysticism that can be encountered in the spiritual direction.

The Way of the Mystic is by Betty Bethards and Jaclyn Catalfo. This book is representative of ideas encountered in the 'New Age' literature, although it was classified as a Christian text in a large bookstore.[9] *The Way of the Mystic* addresses a general readership. Using meditations, visualisations and psychological exercises, it

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[7] Gimello writes from the position of a constructionist, one who espouses the belief that mystical experience is created out of the context and expectations of the particular mystic. (Robert M Gimello, 1983, Mysticism in Its Context, in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, Steven T Katz, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 86.)

[8] For the survey, see Chapter 5 below.

[9] The principal author, Betty Bethards, comes from a Baptist background but was influenced in her ideas by a near death experience.

offers a seven-week course on becoming a mystic. The goal is 'enlightenment', or union with the divine source, and the developing of 'mystical intuition'.[10]

In the first week, the focus of *The Way of the Mystic* is upon 'Tapping into your Hotline to the Divine'. The opening section, 'Becoming a Mystic', begins:

> From the beginning of time, humankind has had a direct line to the divine mind. Each of us has an inner treasure map with a marked path to lead us to our ultimate destination. We know exactly how to bring forth our merger with the God Self. When we hear truth, we recognize it immediately and understand. Some of us feel goose bumps or chills going up our spines - and others just have a heart-felt hit that says, 'I knew that'.[11]

According to Bethards and Catalfo, mysticism consists of 'a direct, intimate union of the soul with God'.[12] From the introductory passage quoted above and in the subsequent development of the text, this union is goal-directed, individualistic, possible to attain by human effort, monistic, and at the same time, related to experience of the numinous. In *The Way of the Mystic*, individuals assume responsibility for and become the creators and managers of their own experience.

The second book, *Reality through the Looking-Glass* by Christopher Clarke, represents arguments derived from the new scientific paradigm which highlights inter-relationships.[13] This book was promoted at a conference for consciousness studies and sold at the 20th Conference for Mystics and Scientists.[14] The book is aimed at a general readership interested in the new scientific paradigm. In *Reality through the Looking-Glass*, Christopher Clarke discusses different models of reality associated with altered states of consciousness. Mysticism is an altered state defined as 'an apprehension of an order that appears *more real* (more vivid, believable, certain, absolute) than our ordinarily perceived world'.[15] Clarke argues that the world can be investigated through mystical experience. However, such an exploration is

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[10] Betty Bethards and Jaclyn Catalfo, 1995, *The Way of the Mystic*, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 12, 13.
[11] Ibid., 11.
[12] Ibid., 12.
[13] Christopher Clarke is a Professor of Applied Mathematics at the University of Southampton. He is a Christian and is involved in the creation spirituality movement established by the Dominican, Matthew Fox.
[14] Beyond the Brain, a conference held at St John's College, Oxford, 25th-27th August 1995; and the Mystics and Scientists held at St Alfred's College, Winchester, 11th-13th April 1997.
[15] C J S Clarke, 1996, *Reality through the Looking-Glass: Science and Awareness in the Post-modern World*, Edinburgh: Floris Books, 187.

preceded by and 'inseparable from morality and action'.[16] As a Christian, Clarke links this action with the practice of love. Although Clarke concedes that mystical experience can occur in isolated incidents, mysticism, properly understood, involves a continuing process, or as Clarke writes, 'a journey that leads much deeper.'[17]

Finally, *The Mystical Chorus* by Donald Broadribb is written from a philosophical-psychological perspective and was sent to me by a Christian spiritual director and psychotherapist.[18] Although the author disclaims its value as a textbook, the reviewers on the cover of the book suggest that it is suitable for students in religious studies and the philosophy of religion. *The Mystical Chorus* covers the nature of religion, Buddhism, Christianity, Mysticism, American Indian beliefs and Australian Aboriginal religion. The objective of the book is to present those religious principles which are found in all cultures. Broadribb suggests that mysticism provides the common core that links the different traditions that he reviews. In this he follows in the tradition set by writers such as William James, Evelyn Underhill, W T Stace, William Johnston and Matthew Fox.[19]

In *The Mystical Chorus*, mysticism is described as 'a direct encounter with God – an encounter without anything or anyone intervening, neither prayers, rituals, doctrines, priests nor teachers'.[20] Mysticism is held to be an experience that is wholly individualistic. Consequently,

> Mystics may or may not shun religious organizations and meetings, but tend to consider them a hindrance or at least not essential. For the mystic, a person-to-person two way meeting on an equal footing with God, and often a merger with God, is the most important aspect of religion.[21]

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[16] C J S Clarke, 1996, *Reality through the Looking-Glass*, 187.
[17] Ibid., 188.
[18] For ten years, Donald Broadribb lectured in biblical studies and languages and comparative religion at the University of Melbourne. He was a Quaker for over 18 years before becoming a Jungian psychotherapist.
[19] William James, 1902/1928, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, London: Longmans, Green and Co.; Evelyn Underhill, 1911, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, 14th edn., London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.; W T Stace, 1960, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.; William Johnston, 1970, *The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism*, New York: Fordham University Press; Matthew Fox, 1988, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance*, San Francisco: Harper.
[20] Donald Broadribb, 1995, *The Mystical Chorus*, Alexandria, NSW: Millennium Books, 109.
[21] Ibid., 110.

The function of mystical experience is the reunification of a person's ego-consciousnes with his/her inner depths, variously called such names as 'God', '*Atman*' or 'the inner light'. In the above passage, there is a breach between the individual and the community to such an extent that at best the community is unessential and at worst it becomes an obstruction to this reunification. As in *The Way of the Mystic*, the individual is 'on an equal footing with God'. The goal is also seen in terms of 'merger' with God, although Broadribb does distinguish between a mysticism of 'union' where God and the person merge to become one entity and a subject-object distinction is lost and a mysticism of 'communion' where although union is achieved, a merger with God does not occur and the subject-object distinction remains.[22]

These three texts exhibit several conceptions that have become associated with mysticism in the twentieth century. All the authors assume that mysticism is an altered state of consciousness and that this altered state is open to all people. Although orientated towards a goal called union, variously defined in terms of absorption or communion, for all of these authors mysticism involves a process of growth. Mysticism can be highly individualistic as in the cases of Bethards and Broadribb or it can presume a moral, communal dimension as in the example of Clarke. Although it has been argued that numinous experience is distinct from mystical experience, Bethards associates the numinous with mysticism.[23] Both Broadribb and Clarke treat mysticism as the common core to world religions.

In the following sections, I will use each of these texts in turn and link them with a different way in which mysticism can be understood. I will review some of the types of studies associated with these different ways. These approaches to mysticism share a common characteristic that allows us to differentiate them and connect them with one of the networks identified in a landscape. This will allow us to situate the different interpretations within the framework of a landscape, thus enabling us to see the relationship between them as well as how those excluded from one type of understanding may be included within the scope of another.

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[22] Donald Broadribb, 1995, *The Mystical Chorus*, 114-128.
[23] The argument for distinguishing the numinous from the mystical is found in Ninian Smart, 1958, *Reasons and Faiths*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

3.2 Mysticism as an Altered State of Consciousness and a Geology of Experiencing

The Way of the Mystic by Betty Bethards and Jaclyn Catalfo suggests that mysticism is an altered stated of consciousness. In their opening description of the mystical, they draw upon aspects taken from several philosophical debates in the twentieth century. According to Michel de Certeau, the word mysticism is a late development in the history of Christianity arising out of a restructuring of knowledge in the seventeenth century.[24] He argues there was an older tradition, in which what was conceived as mystical was concomitant with both practice and belief. This tradition was supplanted by one in which there was a desire to experimentally verify truth. Thus,

> Since the sixteenth or seventeenth century one no longer designates as mystical the kind of 'wisdom' elevated to the recognition of a mystery already lived and proclaimed in common beliefs, but an experimental knowledge which has slowly detached itself from traditional theology or Church institutions and which characterizes itself through the consciousness, acquired or received, of a gratified passivity where the self is lost in God.[25]

Here, de Certeau distinguishes two phases in the western understanding of what is considered mystical. In the first phase, the 'mystery' is part of a pattern of life, it is found within the Church, and it is understood with reference to a particular theological framework.[26] If spiritual direction is seen from this perspective, then God's action within the soul and the soul's response are not isolated from the 'common beliefs' of the Church, and consequently personal experience remains within an objective context that is ecclesiastical, scriptural and sacramental. However, once 'one seeks observable *facts*', it is possible to separate the subjective

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[24] Michel de Certeau, 1988, *The Writing of History*, trans., Tom Conley, New York: Columbia University Press, 132. See also Bernard McGinn, 1991, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 311-312.
[25] Michel de Certeau quoted by Bernard McGinn, 1991, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 311-312.
[26] This is similar to the eastern tradition where, according to Vladimir Lossky, the inter-relationship between mystery and belief has not become separated:

> We must live the dogma expressing a revealed truth, which appears to us as an unfathomable mystery, in such a fashion that instead of assimilating the mystery to our mode of understanding, we should, on the contrary, look for a profound change, an inner transformation of spirit, enabling us to experience it mystically. (Vladimir Lossky, 1957, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Cambridge & London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd, 8.)

In this tradition, there is interplay between human understanding and transcendent mystery with the former being drawn ever deeper into the latter.

content of experience from its context.[27] Consequently, experience is open to scientific investigation and comparative study with similarly reported experiences from other traditions. In this way, the adjective mystical is applied to a wide range of phenomena such as visions and voices, psycho-dynamic catharsis, numinous experiences and particular altered states of consciousness, and investigations occur across a variety of disciplines including physiology, psychology and philosophy.

3.2.1 Neuro-physiological and Psychological Approaches

In exploring the model of the 'landscape of the soul', I suggested a geological network associated with the processes of experiencing. This network is comprised of such systems as neurology, physiology and psychology but at the same time influenced by additional socio-cultural elements. Once the assumption is made that the mystical is related to particular altered states of consciousness, then it is possible to link similar neurological or pathological states with it. Thus, if the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is used, it could be said that we are examining the mystical from the perspective of a geology of the neuro-physiological processes involved in experience. Therefore, from a reductionist position, that which is considered mystical is reduced to 'nothing-but' electrochemical processes occurring in the human brain. For example, by studying the differential activity between the left and right hemispheres, M Pressinger suggests a neuro-electrical basis for mystical experience. He found that by stimulating the temporal lobes, electrochemical intrusions from the right hemisphere can be induced and that these intrusions are frequently interpreted as 'cosmic consciousness', 'spiritual beings' or the 'numinous'.[28] Although such experiences can be studied in terms of the chemistry of the brain, Pressinger observes that environmental stimuli are influential in affecting the experimental results and therefore besides neuro-physiology, other factors need to be taken into consideration.

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[27] Michel de Certeau, 1988, *The Writing of History*, 132.

[28] These types of experiences reflect the affective functioning of the right hemisphere. Because the right hemisphere tends to process information in non-linguistic modes, these experiences are frequently reported as ineffable. (M A Pressinger, 1991, Vectorial Cerebral Hemisphericity as Differential Sources for the Sensed Presence, Mystical Experiences and Religious Conversions, *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 76: 916.)

Indeed, earlier electrocephalographic studies substantiate Pressinger's observations. For example, Akira Kasamatsu and Tomio Harai, two Japanese researchers, investigated the alterations in EEG pattern before, during and after Zazen, the sitting meditation in Zen Buddhism.[29] According to the proficiency of the practitioner, different patterns of alpha waves developed, sometimes changing to rhythmical theta waves. When a click stimulus was used, this appeared on the electrocephalograph as a return to the beta waves.[30] This process is called alpha blocking. The control subjects who were used in this experiment became habituated to the repetition of the clicks. They lost awareness of the noise and consequently there was no return to the beta wave pattern with successive clicks. However, in proficient practitioners of Zazen, the alpha blocking continued to occur regardless of the number of clicks. These results are claimed to reflect the 'mindfulness' training in Zen in which adherents are trained to be aware of the 'here' and 'now'.

However, B K Anand, G S Chhina and Baldev Singh carried out similar research on Yogis.[31] Again, alpha waves were recorded during meditation. The subjects were exposed to a variety of external stimuli. In the case of the Yogis, there was no alpha blocking, that is, there was no return to beta waves. This is consistent with Yoga practice where the meditator is trained to be oblivious to both external and internal environments. The alpha blocking responses in the studies of Zen and Yoga reflect the philosophical perspectives of the practitioners.

In relation to the model of the 'landscape of the soul', it is possible to postulate a geology of experiencing at an elemental neuro-physiological level. However, these studies on Zen and Yoga suggest that the belief systems of those practising meditation can influence the experiences that occur. Therefore, a wider interpretation of a geology of experiencing is necessary.

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[29] Akira Kasamatsu and Tomio Harai, 1966/1969, An Electroencephalographic Study on Zen Meditation (Zazen), in *Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Charles T Tart, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 489-506.

[30] The click is a noise stimulus intended to disrupt the pattern of brain waves being recorded on the electrocephalograph. (Akira Kasamatsu and Tomio Harai, 1966/1969, An Electroencephalographic Study on Zen Meditation (Zazen), 495.)

[31] B K Anand, G S Chhina and B Baldev Singh, 1961/1969, Electroencephalographic Studies in Yogis, in *Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Charles T Tart, 503-506.

3.2.2 Consciousness Studies

In elaborating the model, a move was made from elemental neuro-physiological correlates of experiencing to a more general psychological perspective. Although everyday consciousness may be felt to be 'natural', it is a highly selective construction arising from the interplay of physical and psycho-social factors. Enculturation contributes to an everyday or consensus consciousness that is usually considered as the baseline state.[32] Susan Blackmore observes that the brain is a model builder and that the mystical state of consciousness is a particular model in which there is no subject-object dichotomy.[33] If mysticism is limited to subjective experience, then it is possible to investigate some of the different models that are associated with mystical consciousness and within each model to analyse how these experiences arise as well as their nature.

Familiar altered states of consciousness that are frequently linked with mysticism include dreaming, hypnosis and drug-induced and meditative states.[34] Various disruptive forces can alter consensus consciousness. For example,

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[32] Each distinctive state of consciousness is characterised by a particular form. For example, in consensus consciousness, a person would not normally expect to fly, whereas flying is one of the many potentials in the dream state. Although variation is possible within a state, the overall pattern remains the same. When examining particular states of consciousness, individual differences need to be considered. For example, mystical prayer is considered a distinct form of consciousness. Yet, according to Teresa of Avila, the spiritual marriage is a state of prayer in which union is incorporated into consensus consciousness. Therefore, what for one person may be two distinct states of consciousness may for another be only one. (Robert E Ornstein, 1972, *The Psychology of Consciousness*, 31, 45; Charles T Tart, 1969, Introduction, in *Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Charles T Tart, 2; Charles T Tart, 1975, *States of Consciousness*, New York: E P Dutton & Co. Inc., 4, 33.)

[33] Susan Blackmore, 1991, Mental Models and Mystical Experience, in *Space in Mind*, eds. John Crook and David Fontana, Longmead, Shaftesbury: Element, 66-75; Guy Claxton, 1980, Cognitive Psychology: A Suitable Case for what Sort of Treatment?, in *Cognitive Psychology*, ed. Guy Claxton, London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 18.

[34] Some researchers use hypnosis to induce religious experiences. Richard Shrout claims that 'the state achieved through self-hypnosis is really the mystical state achieved by the saints of the Christian tradition'. (Richard Shrout quoted by David L Walker, 1988, Hypnosis and Religious/Mystical Experience, *The Australian Journal of Hypnotherapy and Hypnosis* 9(2): 81.) Although David Walker questions the assumption that 'the heart of religion lies in a particular experience', he stills sees the validity using hypnotic induced experiences to promote spiritual growth. (David L Walker, 1988, Hypnosis and Religious/Mystical Experience, *The Australian Journal of Hypnotherapy and Hypnosis* 9(2): 81.) George Matheson See alsos hypnosis as a way of inducing religious experience by enabling the subject to relinquish control of rational modes of consciousness and access unconscious levels. (George Matheson, Hypnotic Aspects of Spiritual Experience, *Pastoral Psychology* 35(2): 111.)

psychoactive drugs affect the chemistry of the brain. Such drugs have been used in several cultures as a means of altering consensus consciousness. Another traditional method for inducing mystical experiences is through a deliberate change in the pattern of breathing. Underbreathing or overbreathing (hyperventilation) modifies the oxygen/carbon dioxide levels in the body thereby precipitating an alteration in perception. Fasting, fever and fatigue, as well as exertion and excitement can also disrupt physiological processes with a similar consequence. Psychologically, an altered state of consciousness may be induced by changes in sensory perception arising from different concentration techniques. Perception may also be changed through sensory driving as in the case of the whirling dervishes.[35] Ascetics in different religious traditions have traditionally fostered meditative techniques. Depending upon the belief system, claims have been made for a direct unmediated encounter with God. However, because meditative techniques provide a means of altering consciousness, these experiences may be the result of psycho-physiological changes occurring within the human biosystem.

What are we seeing when mysticism is interpreted in terms of the function of the brain or the psychology of consciousness? I suggest that with respect to the model of the 'landscape of the soul', these types of studies reflect different levels of a geology that underlies and affects the process of experiencing. When the mystical is conceived in terms of subjective experiences independent of tradition or the lived context, such experiences can be reduced to their constituent parts. From this perspective, the potential for mystical experiences is seen as a human phenomenon contingent upon neurological processes and psychological mechanisms.

If it is conceded that mysticism is a particular type of consciousness, it then follows that mysticism can be analysed and certain characteristics distinguished as important in defining a mystical state. Furthermore, once such a subjective state of consciousness is identified, it becomes possible to investigate this state cross-culturally and this is what has occurred in the twentieth century where comparative studies have drawn upon the writings of mystics from different traditions such as

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[35] Neurones fire in a rhythmic manner and if an incoming stimulus has a similar rhythm, then it is possible that the amplitude and frequency will be changed in the brain rhythm thus inducing an altered state of consciousness. (Andrew Neher, 1990, *The Psychology of Transcendence*, 15-19.)

Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Some of the discourses have been concerned with the phenomenology of mystical experience, the question of a universal mystical core at the heart of all religions, as well as whether such experiences are for an elite.

3.2.3 Comparative Religion and Philosophical Approaches

In the example of *The Way of the Mystic*, the concept of mysticism draws upon ideas and attributes taken from different discourses in philosophy and comparative religion. Although Bethards and Catalfo do not explicitly use the characteristics enumerated by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, this work was seminal in the twentieth-century approach to both psychological and philosophical analysis of mystical states of consciousness. According to James there are four salient characteristics in mystical experience. It is ineffable, noetic, transient and passive.[36] Ineffability refers to the difficulty in expressing and communicating the experience. Mystical states of consciousness are noetic in that they confer knowledge that is beyond discursive thought. James observed that mystical experiences generally do not last for any length of time and therefore concluded that they were transient. Finally, the fourth characteristic of mystical experiences is passivity. Although people can consciously prepare for mystical experiences, such experiences cannot be created. They frequently occur suddenly and are not what is expected. The characteristics postulated by James are general and could be used to describe a range of subjective states. Nevertheless, these four marks of the mystical are often cited in contemporary discussions about

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[36] William James, 1902/1928, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 380-382.

mysticism.[37]

In Bethards' and Catalfo's understanding of mysticism, they included the numinous. This term is derived from the work of Rudolf Otto in *The Idea of the Holy* where he investigated the non-rational element in religious experience. Otto created the designation 'numinous' to describe intuitive experiences of 'the holy'.[38] He claims that these experiences are more than intensive natural feelings and he describes the modes of the numinous in terms of the *Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans*.[39]

In the experience of the numinous, the mysterious is 'wholly other' from all that is familiar and natural. According to Otto, the non-rational element of 'otherness' is emphatically stressed in mysticism:

> Mysticism continues to its extreme point this contrasting of the numinous object (the numen), as the 'wholly other', with ordinary experience. Not content with contrasting it with all that is of nature or this world, mysticism concludes by contrasting it with Being itself and all that 'is', and finally actually calls it 'that which is nothing'. By this 'nothing' is meant not only that of which nothing can be predicated, but that which is absolutely and intrinsically other than and opposite of everything that is and can be thought.[40]

The only way to conceptualise the *mysterium* is through negation and contrast. Otto likens the 'void' and the 'nothing' which is encountered in mysticism to a numinous ideogram for the 'wholly other'. The 'wholly other' can be felt even if it cannot be conceptually defined.

Otto indicates that the feeling-responses created by an encounter with the

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[37] For example, William O Paulsell uses the four characteristics of William James to frame his discussion of Bernard of Clairvaux (William O Paulsell, 1989, William James and Bernard of Clairvaux on Mystical Experience, *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, 10(2): 171-180); William Johnston acknowledges the validity of the four characteristics in defining mysticism cross-culturally (William Johnston, 1970, *The Still Point*, New York: Fordham University Press, 144-145); F C Happold and Frances Vaughan both use James' characteristics in their definitions of mysticism (F C Happold, 1963, *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology*, London: Penguin Books, 45-50; Frances Vaughan, 1989, Characteristics of Mysticism, *ReVision* 12(2): 23-24). Similarly, James' four characteristics are found in C P M Jones' comprehensive list (C P M Jones, 1986, Mysticism, Human and Divine, In *The Study of Spirituality*, 17-23). See also Karel Werner, 1989, Mysticism as Doctrine and Experience, in *The Yogi and the Mystic: Studies in Indian and Comparative Mysticism*, ed. Karel Werner, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press Ltd., 2.

[38] Rudolf Otto, 1958, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. by John W Harvey, London: Oxford University Press, 6.

[39] Ibid., 8-11; 41-49.

[40] Ibid., 29.

numinous are elemental to all religious experiences and hence he does not make a distinction between numinous and mystical experiences. It was through the work of Ninian Smart that a distinction was introduced between the numinous and the mystical.

In *Reasons and Faiths*, Ninian Smart contends that mystical states are those which are 'indescribable' and do not involve the senses or any mental images. The essence of mysticism is timelessness, imperceptibility and transcendence. Therefore, experiences like that of the numinous that involve perception are not mystical. In addition, genuine mystical experience occurs within the ascetic discipline of a particular spirituality and therefore cannot be spontaneous.[41] Mysticism, as an inner, contemplative quest, aims at a state of 'consciousness-purity' or 'void' in which the subject-object polarity disappears and in which there are no mental images or concepts. As a consequence of the lack of perceptions during a mystical experience, the mystic is totally unaware of the passage of time. Insofar as the mystic turns away from the empirical world of the senses, the experience is said to be transcendent. Thus, from the perspective of Smart, Bethards' and Catalfo's use of the numinous runs counter to their 'merger' with God, if this merger is seen as an experience where subject-object duality is lost and a state of 'consciousness-purity' created.

Another debate concerning mysticism is echoed in *The Way of the Mystic* when the authors adopt the perennialist idea that there is one mystical core, which is manifested variously. Writers such as William James, Evelyn Underhill and W T Stace maintain that there is a common mystical experience that is interpreted contextually.[42] Fox writes that:

> Mysticism is, like art, a common language, uttering a common experience. There is only *one* great underground river [Eckhart], though there are numerous wells into it - Buddhist wells and Taoist wells, Native American wells and Christian wells, Islamic wells and Judaic wells.[43]

However, it is also argued that there are many types of mysticism. In *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*, the comparative religionist R C Zaehner presents a three-fold

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[41] Ninian Smart, 1958, *Reasons and Faiths*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 71, 55.
[42] It should be noted that, influenced by Baron von Hügel, Evelyn Underhill changed her position in later life.
[43] Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance*, San Francisco: Harper, 230.

typology as a response to Aldous Huxley's book *The Doors of Perception*. Zaehner challenges what he felt was Huxley's assumption that all mysticism is 'essentially one and the same'.[44] Zaehner sought to demonstrate that there are several types of mystical experience rather than a 'common core' experience upon which various interpretations are constructed.

The typology of mystical experience Zaehner proposes is based on an understanding of mysticism restricted to the experience in which:

> Sense perception and discursive thought are transcended in an immediate apperception of a unity or union which is apprehended as lying beyond and transcending the multiplicity of the world as we know it.[45]

Thus, Zaehner excludes from mysticism phenomena such as visions, locutions, clairvoyance, extra-sensory perception and levitation. Using the motif of 'union', Zaehner distinguishes three distinct types of mysticism that he identifies as panenhenic or nature, monistic and theistic.[46] Nature mysticism describes the experience of 'you are all and that all is you'.[47] It is an experience of unity where the 'all' is experienced as 'one' and 'one as all'. Zaehner calls this experience 'panenhenism' meaning 'all-in-one-ism' rather than pantheism, which means 'all-God-ism'. Monistic mysticism is characterised by the loss of the subject-object polarity. In addition to, and in contrast with panenhenic mysticism, it is devoid of perceptual content; that is, there is no relation with the external world through any form of sensory experience. Thus, monist mystical experience is non-sensory and the mystic is lost in a unity with an 'Absolute'. This type of experience is one aspect of the mystical suggested in *The Way of the Mystic.* Theistic mysticism is distinguished from monistic experience in that a sense of duality, of distinction between the person and the Absolute, is maintained even at the peak of the unitive event.

In these debates it can be seen that there are different refining features which delineate how the mystical is perceived. Hence, Smart makes a division between the experience of the numinous which involves the senses and a mysticism that is

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[44] R C Zaehner, 1961, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, ix, 12.
[45] Ibid., 198-199.
[46] In place of Zaehner's term panenhenic, I will be using the term nature mysticism.
[47] R C Zaehner, 1961, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, 28.

perceived as perceptionless. Zaehner classifies the mystical according to the particular experience of union. In response to Zaehner's work, the philosopher W T Stace carried this process of definition further by attempting to isolate what he considers the 'pure' experience from the interpretative framework of the experience.[48] Stace criticises Zaehner's typology as being based on beliefs and as failing to distinguish adequately between experience and interpretation. Thus, in *Mysticism and Philosophy*, he seeks to elucidate a set of characteristics that are common to all mystical experiences.[49] Whatever form mysticism may take, for Stace its essence is the unitive experience.[50] This is a phenomenologically non-dualistic state of consciousness, that is, a state without a subject-object structure. Although union is dependent upon culture, beliefs and the temperament of the individual, it is part of the experience and not an interpretation. He distinguishes two forms of mysticism – the extrovertive and the introvertive.[51] Whereas Smart discounts the experience of a nature mysticism, Stace allows for this type of experience in the extrovertive state.[52] Here, experience is outwardly directed and involves the senses in the apprehension of the 'One'. In contrast, the introvertive experience corresponds more closely to Smart's concept of mysticism in that it involves the total lack of perception which results from a cutting off of the senses.[53] Hence, the introvertive experience is a state of union with the 'One' and is devoid of plurality. Both altered states are characterised by a sense of objectivity, the feeling of blessedness and peace, the sense of the holy, paradox and ineffability.[54] The essential core is the unitive event. According to Stace, Christian mysticism is not fully developed because a dualistic separation remains between Creator and creature.

So far, if we are looking at the model of the 'landscape of the soul', we have seen an understanding of mysticism reduced to electro-chemical processes in the brain that are linked with particular types of experiences. At a different level of interpretation, we have also observed that the adjective mystical is applied to an

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[48] W T Stace, 1960, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 31.
[49] Ibid., 43.
[50] Ibid., 61.
[51] Ibid., 61.
[52] Ibid., 62-81.
[53] Ibid., 85-111.
[54] Ibid., 79, 110-111.

altered state or states of consciousness. However, there is a lack of consensus on what characterises this state or group of associated states. What has occurred in the 'landscape of the soul' is that within the broad range of potential human experiences, a small subset of experiences has been identified as mystical. There is a further philosophical debate about the nature of what is happening in these types of experiences.

It has already been seen that at an elemental level in a geology of experiencing, factors such as philosophical preconceptions can influence the type of experience that occurs. Constructionists such as Ninian Smart and Steven Katz question the validity of a common core mystical experience. They contend that mysticism, like all experience, is culturally determined. In *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, Katz claims that:

> *There are* NO *pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences.* Neither mystical experience nor more ordinary forms of experience give any indication, or any grounds for believing, that they are unmediated. That is to say, *all* experience is processed through, organized by, and makes itself available to us in extremely complex epistemological ways.[55]

Since the publication of his paper 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', Steven Katz has been a central figure in the epistemological debate about the nature of mysticism. Although he acknowledges the different ways in which mystical experience can be interpreted, his concern is with a more fundamental 'preinterpretive' process that centres on the question of 'why mystical experiences are the experiences they are'.[56]

Katz begins with the presupposition that there '*are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences*'. Experience both shapes and is shaped by complex interaction with the social-cultural environment. Consequently, the Christian experiences a Christian God whereas a Hindu experiences Brahman. A 'pre-mystical consciousness', with its symbols and belief systems, influences the total mystical experience.[57] Katz argues that mystical experience is composed of a 'two-directional symmetry' between experience and belief. Language, beliefs and social and cultural

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[55] Steven T Katz, 1978, Language, Epistemology and Mysticism, in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T Katz, London: Sheldon Press, 26 [italics in original].
[56] Ibid., 23, 26.
[57] Ibid., 26-27.

factors influence the worldview, the approach and the expectations of the sacred. Mystics may appear to be describing similar experiences because of the terms that they employ. However, in the context of particular beliefs, these terms may mean radically different things, and hence portray different experiences.

In contrast to the constructionist position exemplified by Katz, mystical experience has also been analysed according to what is variously referred to as deconstruction, deconditioning or decontextualism. Here it is argued that mystical experience is the consequence of a 'forgetting' of language and therefore is non-symbolic. Robert K Forman is a key proponent of decontextualism. He limits mystical experience to a pure consciousness event that he defines as 'a wakeful though contentless (nonintentional) consciousness'.[58]

In the hypothesis suggested by Steven Katz, mystical experience is shaped and influenced by the social-cultural horizon, including religious beliefs. However, Robert Forman observes that two categories of mystical experiences appear to contradict Katz's position.[59] First, there are those experiences that occur suddenly to the unprepared. In these occurrences a person is neither expecting the experience, nor has the epistemological background to formulate what has happened. These transforming events often stimulate a person to begin a spiritual journey in search of an understanding. The second category of mystical experiences occurs to people who have been consciously engaged in a spiritual discipline aimed at the unitive event. However, when the experience occurs, it is radically different from the expectations which have been fostered by the particular religious tradition, and consequently the person may be both surprised and confused.

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[58] Robert K C Forman, 1990, Introduction: Mysticism, Constructivism and Forgetting, in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness*, ed. Robert K C Forman, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 8. Robert Forman suggests that this pure consciousness event is an introvertive mystical state. However, whereas for W T Stace this state is the most advanced form of mystical experience, Forman makes a counter proposal that the pure consciousness event is a rudimentary form of the extrovert state. He argues that the pure consciousness event is simple in content and transient in duration. Extrovertive forms of mystical experience are complex because sensory perceptions are involved. In addition, these states are incorporated into consensus consciousness.

[59] Robert K C Forman, 1988, The Construction of Mystical Experience, *Faith and Philosophy* 5(3): 258-259; Robert K C Forman, 1990, Introduction: Mysticism, Constructivism and Forgetting, 19-21; Robert K C Forman, 1994, 'Of Capsules and Carts': Mysticism, Language and the *Via Negativa*, *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 1(1): 41.

Forman identifies a disparity that exists between the cognitive complexity necessary for constructed events and the simplicity that is implicit in pure consciousness. Pure consciousness events are devoid of complexity and therefore:

> It is hard to see how one could say that the pure consciousness event is mediated, if by that it is meant that *during* the event the mystic is employing concepts, differentiating his awareness according to religious patterns and symbols, drawing upon memory, apprehension, expectation, language or accumulation of prior experience, or discriminating and integrating. It just does not seem that there is sufficient complexity during the pure consciousness event to say that any such elements are involved.[60]

Pure consciousness appears to be a non-symbolic event. Consequently, Forman suggests that mystical experience is an '*un*-constructing of language and belief'.[61] In order to substantiate his thesis, Robert Forman appeals to the writings of the mystics in which there are passages which speak of forgetting, ceasing to think or putting the mind behind a cloud of unknowing.

Karl Werner observes that mystical 'writings are probably as old as writing itself, but writings on mysticism are an innovation of this century, so the subject is young'.[62] With the turn to subjectivity, the mystical has been reduced to discrete experiences and a science of mysticism created. Like a chameleon, the nature and purpose of the debates concerning mysticism change from discipline to discipline and references drawn from spiritual writings of different traditions are used to support opposing positions. Although the assumption that the mystical is related to a particular type of subjective experience is pervasive, there is a lack of consensus about the defining characteristics or about the influence of context on the type and interpretation of such experiences.

In exploring the metaphor of landscape, I suggested that geology be likened to the processes involved in human experiencing. Like the geology of a landscape, these processes underlie the landscape, although they may be modified and influenced by other landscape processes. The first text, *The Way of the Mystic*, depicts an understanding of the mystical as an altered state of consciousness defined

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[60] Stephen Bernhardt and Anthony N. Perovich, Jr., quoted by Robert K. C. Forman, 1988, The Construction of Mystical Experience, 257.
[61] Robert K C Forman, 1994, 'Of Capsules and Carts', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 1(1): 42.
[62] Karel Werner, 1989, Mysticism as Doctrine and Experience, in *The Yogi and the Mystic*, 1.

by characteristics drawn from several different debates. If mysticism is understood as a particular subjective state or states, it can be situated within a geology of experiencing. However, as the studies in neuro-physiology, psychology, comparative religion and philosophy demonstrate, an exact and definitive mapping of mysticism as an altered state is not possible.

3.3 Mysticism as a Stage and a Geomorphology of Growing

The second popular text that I briefly reviewed was *Reality through the Looking-Glass* by Christopher Clarke. Although he defined the mystical in terms of an altered state, he held that this state was part of a process, 'a journey that leads much deeper'.[63] This understanding highlights the second theme that I wish to map, that is, mysticism as a stage in prayer or psycho-spiritual development.

3.3.1 Mysticism as a Stage in Prayer

In the Christian west, during the twelfth century, a sense of an individual self begins to emerge.[64] Concomitant with this, the understanding and description of the encounter with the mystery of God shifts and subjective experience begins to be emphasised.[65] Increasingly, the search for and encounter with the sacred is described in terms of inner, subjective states.[66] With the gradual association of the mystical with subjective states, discernment between God's action and self-deception becomes an issue at both the pastoral level and at the level of ecclesiastical authority. The two sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelites, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, portray in their writings the inter-relationships between God and the soul that they observed in those under their care. Their concern is pastoral, that is, with what today is called spiritual direction. For example, in the Prologue to *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*,

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[63] C J S Clarke, 1996, *Reality through the Looking-Glass*, 187.
[64] Sarah Coakley, 1992, Visions of the Self in Late Medieval Christianity, in *Philosophy, Religion and the Spiritual Life*, ed. Michael McGhee, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 94.
[65] Ibid., 94-98; Caroline Walker Bynum, 1980, Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31(1): 3; See also, Caroline Walker Bynum, 1982, Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?, in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Berkley: University of California Press, 82-109.
[66] Sarah Coakley, 1992, Visions of the Self in Late Medieval Christianity, 96.

John of the Cross records that the book is for those who do not advance in prayer through timidity, ignorance or inadequate direction.[67] Teresa of Avila wrote the *Interior Castle* in obedience to her confessor and as response to her sisters who requested guidance in prayer.[68]

Although ultimately they were concerned with the discernment of God's activity within the soul, the writings of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila provided successive generations with a framework in which prayer was further systematised and psychologised. One system depicting mystical prayer, derived from the works of Teresa of Avila, identifies four stages: prayer of quiet, prayer of union, the spiritual betrothal (prayer of conforming union) and the spiritual marriage (prayer of transforming union).[69] Briefly, prayer of quiet, described in the fourth mansion in Teresa's *Interior Castle*, is the lowest degree of mystical prayer and forms the initial stage of the soul's direct encounter with God. Here, a powerful sense of God's presence occurs. In the prayer of full union (Fifth Mansion), the soul has moved deeper into God and is brought into a union of love. Although the experience of union may be brief, to the soul this experience is unquestionably real. The spiritual betrothal (Sixth Mansion) describes the perfecting of the union of love and includes times of trial as well as ecstatic experiences. Finally, in the spiritual marriage (Seventh Mansion) there occurs a mutual self-giving in love between God and the soul. Whereas the betrothal is transitory, in the spiritual marriage the soul remains united to God even in daily occupations.[70]

If the description of mystical prayer is taken indiscriminately from the accounts of Christian mystics, confusion can arise. First, because the language employed by spiritual writers is contextual, it is hazardous to assume a unity in meaning and to equate their various descriptions of mystical prayer exactly. For example, although both Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross describe the spiritual betrothal and the spiritual marriage, their interpretations of these states differ. For

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[67] John of the Cross, 1991, Prologue, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriquez, Washington, D. C: Institute of Carmelite Studies Publications, Prologue 1-7.
[68] Teresa of Avila, 1946, Introduction, *Interior Castle*, in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, trans. by E Allison Peers, Vol. 2, London, Sheed and Ward, 200.
[69] Jordan Aumann, 1980, *Spiritual Theology*, London: Sheed and Ward, 337-354.
[70] Teresa describes this experience in the image of Mary or Martha (*Interior Castle*, 7.1.10).

Teresa, 'betrothal' and 'marriage' are on a continuum and the difference is one of degree. However, because John of the Cross identifies the Beatific State with spiritual marriage, the difference between 'betrothal' and 'marriage' becomes one of kind.[71] A second source of confusion arises from the mystics themselves. As they grow in spiritual life, they can discover that they have been mistaken or have misinterpreted their experiences.[72] Thus, according to Evelyn Underhill, the divisions of prayer are 'largely artificial and symbolic'.[73]

In the pilgrimage model, the goal of the journey can be identified as union with God. When union is linked to subjective states seen as mystical, we encounter the problem of distinguishing who is or is not a mystic, particularly where patterns of life and experience do not fit with the models. Thus, the systematisation of the stages of spiritual growth and prayer according to psychological states raises basic questions concerning the nature of Christian life and prayer. For example, is mystical prayer for all or is it a special grace given to an elite? At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jesuit Augustine-François Poulain published a treatise called *The Graces of Interior Prayer: A Treatise on Mystical Theology*. Here he maintains that there is a clear distinction between ordinary and mystical prayer with the latter being a gift from God given to only a few individuals.[74] In response, Abbé August Saudreau defended the call of all Christians to mystical life.[75] This division between elitism and universality is still evident. In *What is Mysticism?*, the English Benedictine David Knowles argues that a spiritual elite arises from the manifest inequality in spiritual life.[76] However, for the Swiss Jesuit Hans Urs van Balthasar, the distinctions found in Christian prayer are not of kind but of degree because God, through grace, has endowed all people with the ability to hear His Word.[77] With the

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[71] E W Trueman Dicken, 1963, *The Crucible of Love: A Study of the Mysticism of St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 477-478.
[72] Peter Moore, 1978, Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique, in *Mysticism and Philosophy*, ed. Steven T Katz, New York and London: Macmillan, 126.
[73] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, 309.
[74] Augustin-François Poulain, 1910, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, 2-3.
[75] Bernard McGinn, 1991, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 278-279.
[76] David Knowles, 1966, *What is Mysticism?* London: Sheed and Ward, 51; Hans Urs von Balthasar, 1963, *Prayer*, trans. A V Littledale, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 194-204.
[77] Hans Urs von Balthasar, 1963, *Prayer*, 27-67. Also see 88-102 for a discussion of contemplative prayer in relation to the liturgy.

classification of prayer according to subjective states, there is an ever-present danger that it can be used as a measure of spiritual competence and the delineation of a spiritual elite.

In elaborating the model of the 'landscape of the soul', I suggested that geomorphology could be viewed regionally or in connection with the growth and development of a particular type of landform feature. In the landscape model, I suggest that schemes involving stages of prayer are analogous to following the development of a particular type of landform, for example a sea stack or mountain. Overall, the metaphorical landform is called union and what is traced is the emergence and development of a particular state (or states) of consciousness. Although union can be described in various ways, nevertheless it is seen as the cumulative stage in that transformation of love by which human will is conformed to the will of God. However, to a certain extent the schemes of prayer derived from the Spanish Carmelites have become detached from the context of the life in which they were formulated and consequently they have been ossified around particular altered states. Thus, in spiritual direction, when looking at the 'landscape of the soul', it could be possible for a director to identify mystical union with one type of landscape feature – union as an altered state of consciousness – and overlook its manifestation in a different type.

Ruth Burrows, in *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, recounts just such a scenario where she failed to see the full flowering of mystical life in one of her sisters because she associated such a life with altered states of consciousness in prayer.[78] Hence, although patterns in prayer have been identified, they cannot be rigidly and indiscriminately applied. Each person is like a unique landscape with its own landforms. The development of these landforms will be influenced by the interactions between the different landscape elements. In addition to examining the geomorphology of a landscape with respect to its landforms, it can also be approached from the perspective of a region.

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[78] Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, 2-3.

3.3.2 Mysticism as a Psycho-Spiritual Stage of Development

Using the model of the 'landscape of the soul', schemes related to the development of spiritual life can be associated with regional development in a landscape. Concomitant with the rise of developmental psychology in the twentieth century, human growth, including spiritual growth, has been subjected to increasing analysis. In *Spiritual Development: An Interdisciplinary Study*, Daniel A Helminiak attempts to integrate the work of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Jane Loevinger and James W Fowler into a theoretical model mapping spiritual growth and development. Helminiak assumes that spiritual development is 'nothing other than human development viewed from a particular perspective'.[79] Therefore, one of his objectives is to demonstrate that psychology, not theology, is the discipline that is best able to analyse and chart spiritual development. Although the psychological effects of God's action in the soul remains integral to the description of the stages in prayer, with the development of psycho-spiritual stage theories God can be bracketed out of consideration. Thus, it is possible to consider the mystical as a wholly human psychological phenomenon.

Underlying Helminiak's scheme of spiritual development is the work of Bernard Lonergan. Lonergan postulates that the basic dynamism of the human spirit is expressed through a questioning which is demonstrated at different levels of consciousness: the empirical, the intellectual, the rational and the responsible.[80] Lonergan treats 'consciousness' synonymously with the 'dynamism of the human spirit' and its four-fold structure is manifested through the 'transcendental precepts': 'Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible'.[81] These precepts involve

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[79] Daniel A Helminiak, 1987, *Spiritual Development: An Interdisciplinary Study*, xii.

[80] Bernard Lonergan writes that:

> Different levels of consciousness and intentionality have to be distinguished... There is the empirical level on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move. There is an intellectual level on which we inquire, come to understand, express what we have understood, work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression. There is the rational level on which we reflect, marshal the evidence, pass judgement on the truth or falsity, certainty or probability, of a statement. There is the responsible level on which we are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions. (Bernard Lonergan, 1971, *Method in Theology*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 9.)

[81] Ibid., 20.

a movement towards self-transcendence and thus according to Lonergan, towards human authenticity.

Authenticity is the principal characteristic that Helminiak uses to describe the stages of spiritual growth. By authenticity, he means that physical, psychological and spiritual elements are integrated and harmonious in a person.[82] Other defining characteristics of spiritual development include a person's openness to the transcendental precepts; personal integrity or wholeness; and the ability to be self-critical and self-responsible.[83] For Helminiak, spiritual development is strictly an adult phenomenon because it requires critical evaluation of facts and responsible action. Although he concedes that children do make decisions, he considers these are 'unthinking, uncritical, undifferentiated' because inevitably children have little choice in their lives.[84]

Helminiak delineates five stages of spiritual development: Conformist, Conscientious-Conformist, Conscientious, Compassionate and Cosmic.[85] The foundation of spiritual development begins only when a person becomes 'self-responsible'. Helminiak calls this stage the Conformist. Here, the emphasis is on external authority and significant others. Conformity is stressed with the result that roles tend to be stereotyped. In the Conscientious-Conformist stage there is an increase in a person's self-awareness and sensitivity to the complexity of situations. According to Helminiak, the Conscientious stage is the first true stage of spiritual development. At this point, internalised beliefs are critically assessed as a person constructs a specific worldview. There is a sense of responsibility and commitment to chosen principles. The fourth stage, the Compassionate, is characterised by inner conflict, serving to moderate the previously constructed worldview. In this stage, surrender is learnt, and consequently there is growth in humility and gentleness. The last stage is the Cosmic where former conflicts are transcended and a sense of identity is consolidated. With each stage of spiritual development, there has been a restructuring of the ego in a movement towards authenticity. The Cosmic Stage

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[82] Daniel A Helminiak, *Spiritual Development*, 82.
[83] Ibid. 41.
[84] Ibid., 38.
[85] Ibid., 77-93.

approaches the ideal where:

> One would be fully open to all that is, ever willing to change and adjust as circumstances demand, alive always to the present moment...in touch with the depths of one's own self...in harmony with oneself and with all else...[86]

Helminiak concludes that this is '*nothing other than mysticism...conceived not as a passing experience but as a way of life*'.[87] Thus, for Helminiak, mysticism is understood as the ultimate developmental stage in life. Theism and Christianity can add a further dimension of meaning to this stage but do not contribute to the psychological parameters delineating it.[88]

With such a psycho-spiritual mapping of the mystical, we are once more looking at a specialised landscape region similar to that of mystical prayer. According to Helminiak's scheme, the 'landscape of the soul' becomes the domain for self-actualising individuals. Furthermore, this landscape has little or no connection with the sacred because it is centred on subjective human experience. This last observation brings us to the third theme related to the mystical that I wish to develop, that of the encounter with God.

3.4 Mysticism as a Relationship and an Ecology of Relating

The understanding of the mystical found in *The Mystical Chorus* by Donald Broadribb stands in contrast to the understanding of the mystical as a relationship between God and a person that occurs within a particular context. Broadribb sees the mystical as direct unmediated encounter with God. Furthermore, he conceives such an experience as wholly individualistic. Although he does not totally reject the communal context, he believes that mystics 'may or may not shun religious organizations and meetings, but tend to consider them a hindrance or at least not essential'.[89] The final theme examines a relational understanding of the mystical that is found within and supported by a community of believers.

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[86] Daniel A Helminiak, *Spiritual Development*, 88-89.
[87] Ibid., 89.
[88] Ibid., xv.
[89] Donald Broadribb, 1995, *The Mystical Chorus*, 110.

3.4.1 The Christian Mystery

In his article 'Mysticism/An Essay on the History of the Word', Louis Bouyer traces the origin of Christian usage of the word *mystikos*. Derived from the Greek verb *muo* meaning 'to close', particularly to close the eyes, the earliest association of the word *mystikos* is with the Mystery religions found in the classical Mediterranean world.[90] What was to be kept secret in the Mysteries is not the knowledge gained through participation in the rites: it is the description of the rites.

By the time of Saint Paul, *mystikos* had become a commonplace word describing any mystery. Influenced by Pauline usage, the word was adopted by early Christian writers to describe the mystery of God's revelation in Christ. From its Jewish antecedents, the early Christian community inherited a sense of the authoritative and sacred nature of scripture as well as the exegetical techniques necessary to delve into its deepest meanings. According to Bouyer, the earliest Christian use of *mystikos* is to be found in scriptural exegesis. Gradually, the adjective *mystikos* was applied to the liturgy where the mystery of God is encountered sacramentally. Finally, it was extended to include spiritual life although this life was seen in relation to meditation on the scriptures so that scriptural exegesis and spiritual life were not separated.[91] When early Christian writers appropriated the word *mystikos,* they imbued it with a distinctive meaning. The mystery is the revelation of the love of God through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.

For the early Christian writers, this mystery is interpreted from within the ecclesiastical community and frequently in response to current issues. These points are important to remember in spiritual direction. Although spiritual direction is concerned with the relationship between God and the person, the context of this relationship is a community of believers and the questions with which this community, in part or as a whole, is grappling. The imagery that is used by a writer

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[90] Louis Bouyer, 1980, Mysticism/An Essay on the History of the Word, in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods, London: The Athlone Press, 42-55. For a more extensive study see Louis Bouyer, 1990, *The Christian Mystery: From Pagan Myth to Christian Mysticism*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

[91] Louis Bouyer, 1980, Mysticism/An Essay on the History of the Word, 50.

can reflect a particular perspective. For Origen a certain kinship exists between the soul and God and therefore the spiritual journey is away from darkness towards light. For the Cappadocian Father Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330–395), the world was created *ex nihilo* and there was an unbridgeable gulf between God and creation. Therefore, he developed the motif of darkness as indicative of God's utter unknowability and he expounded a theory of perpetual progress in which the soul is continually drawn into the boundlessness of God with a movement from light to ever-deepening darkness.[92] The encounter with the mystery of God leads to an ever-deepening transformation and self-transcendence. However, the language used to describe this progress varies according to context or in landscape terms, its matrix (historical time and place) and its patches (individual articulation).

3.4.2 Denys the Areopagite

According to Bernard McGinn, it is through translations of the works of Denys the Areopagite (late 5th century AD), that the 'vocabulary of mysticism' was introduced into Latin Christianity.[93] The Areopagitical Corpus that survives consists of ten letters and four treatises: the *Celestial Hierarchy*, the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, the *Divine Names* and the *Mystical Theology*.[94] Once again, as in earlier Christian writings, the concern is with the exegesis of scripture and the works are composed against a backdrop of the liturgy and an ecclesiastical community.[95]

In each of the treatises, Denys describes different ways in which creation comes to union with God. For example, in the *Celestial Hierarchy*, the community of believers' union with God is manifested through fulfilling God's will and in

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[92] In his introduction to a selection of texts by Gregory of Nyssa, Jean Daniélou suggests that 'the most important intuition' in Gregory's theology is *epectasis*:

> It [the soul] rise[s] ever higher and higher, because the heavens to which it soars are an infinite abyss. God becomes ever more intimate and ever more distant: more intimate as the dove, more distant as the Darkness, known by the smallest child and yet unknown to the greatest mystics. For the soul possesses God and yet still seeks Him...

In spiritual life, God is both immanent and transcendent. (Jean Daniélou, 1979, Introduction, *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 54.)

[93] Bernard McGinn, 1991, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, 179.

[94] Andrew Louth, 1989, *Denys the Areopagite*, Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 17.

[95] Ibid., 17-32.

becoming co-workers with God:

> For every member of the hierarchy, perfection consists in this, that it is uplifted to imitate God as far as possible and, more wonderful still, that it becomes what scripture calls a 'fellow workman for God' and a reflection of the working of God.[96]

In the four treatises, Denys illustrates three theological approaches: symbolic, cataphatic and apophatic.[97] The *Celestial Hierarchy* and the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* are symbolic in that they disclose and mediate a reality beyond the world of the senses. The *Divine Names* is cataphatic, that is, it demonstrates the ways in which God can be affirmed and praised. Both symbolic and cataphatic theologies describe what can be said about God. However, the union which is sought occurs beyond images in an apophatic darkness of unknowing.

In the *Mystical Theology*, the 'mysterious darkness of unknowing' is described.[98] This way of approaching the sacred is known as apophatic theology and it emphases the transcendence of God. Every image by which God can be affirmed must be subsequently denied. In *The Darkness of God*, Denys Turner draws attention to the importance of dialectic in the writings of Denys. Both cataphatic and apophatic language can be used to express the mystery that is always beyond all affirmations and denials. Turner argues that the 'apophatic is a linguistic strategy of somehow showing by means of language that which lies beyond language'.[99] Moreover, Turner contends that this dialectic has been misinterpreted in western Christendom. In western Christianity, this language has been reduced to two mutually exclusive spiritual ways – the *Via Affirmativa* and the *Via Negativa*. The *Via Affirmativa* became associated with the way of images and the affirmation of God in creation whilst the *Via Negativa* became a way of negation through unknowing, silence, darkness and passivity. Gradually, the belief arose that the knowledge of God can only be reached through the negation of all images and that this immediate apprehension of God is a secret wisdom gained through love.

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[96] Denys the Areopagite, 1987, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid, The Classics of Western Spirituality, New York: Paulist Press, 165A and B.
[97] Andrew Louth, 1989, *Denys the Areopagite*, 164-178.
[98] Denys the Areopagite, 1987, Mystical Theology, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 1001A.
[99] Denys Turner, 1995, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 34.

Although it is conceded that there is an interplay between the cataphatic and apophatic, the *Via Negativa* came to be seen as 'the perfect way, the only way which is fitting in regard to God'.[100]

It is also through the works of Denys that the three-fold pattern of purification, illumination and union was introduced into the Christian west. In *The Mystical Theology*, Denys describes Moses as first being purified. Next Moses is illumined through the contemplation of the 'holiest and highest of the things perceived with the eye of the body or the mind'. Finally, he is perfected when he 'breaks free of them, away from what sees and is seen, and he plunges into the mysterious darkness of unknowing'.[101] The final goal of this process of uplifting is union or deification – 'to be as like as possible to God and to be at one with him'. Although, for Denys, this pattern is enacted within a liturgical and communal context, it became applied to the inner subjective life of the individual.[102]

What is important for our thesis is that here we see a different interpretation of the mystical. The mystical is related to the manifestation of the love of God through Jesus Christ rather than specific subjective states. Moreover, the encounter with God is something that can be experienced and to which humankind can respond. Our response and the subsequent movement towards union with God can occur through the affirmation of images (cataphatically) or through the negation of images (apophatically) although the moment of union in itself is beyond conception. Furthermore, this movement of God towards humankind and humankind's movement towards God transpires within the context of the ecclesiastical community with its scriptures and liturgy. Such an interpretation of the mystical contrasts with that presented in *The Mystical Chorus* where the cataphatic is discounted and union is seen as a private affair isolated from the wider community.

In constructing the model of the 'landscape of the soul', my focus has been upon the individual in spiritual direction. However, I have assumed a wider church

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[100] Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, xviii-xix.
[101] Denys the Areopagite, 1987, Mystical Theology, In *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 1000C-1001A.
[102] Andrew Louth, 1989, *Denys the Areopagite*, 40-41. In Note 10 in the *Mystical Theology*, in *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works*, Colm Luibheid observes that there is a parallel in the terminology used in the ascent of Moses and the actions that take place in the Eucharistic liturgy.

community in the background. In the general exploration of the metaphor of landscape, I suggested an ecology of relating. This ecology was seen in two ways – through the image of solar radiation and through the network of relationships facilitated through corridors of communication. First, God's love was perceived as background radiation. When God's love is apprehended and a positive response made, a transformative process is initiated. In this third understanding associated with the mystical, God communicates through such corridors as scripture and the liturgy. Human response may occur through the affirmation of images or the negation of images. Both ways can lead to a unitive moment.

Thus far, I have drawn attention to three different types of understandings associated with the term mystical. Both the conception of mysticism as an altered state and as a stage are based on subjective psychological experiences. The sense of the mystical as an encounter with the mystery of God is more an invitation to participate in another reality as revealed to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such an understanding is less reliant on altered states of consciousness. These conceptions of the mystical have been taken from different discourses, located in varying contexts and having different aims. Nevertheless, elements from these different discourses are being woven together to form syncretistic understandings of what is mystical and these understandings can emerge in spiritual direction, influencing the story that is told and its interpretation. Therefore, in order to recognise his or her prejudices as well as facilitate the discernment process for the other, a spiritual director needs to be able to identify the different interpretations of the mystical that may be mixed together in their discourse and also be able to explain how they are related so that a comprehensive picture of spiritual life is created. This last observation brings us to the purpose of the next section. The issues that will be addressed are first, how the different ways of understanding the mystical relate to Christian spiritual life; and second, how these understandings can be situated within the model of the 'landscape of the soul'.

3.5 A Thematic Mapping of Different Understandings of the Mystical

In this thesis, I have defined landscape as a composite of human and environmental systems, that is, a '*synthetic* space' emerging from the interaction of

the different elements or subsystems that comprise the system as a whole.[103] Landscape can be studied with reference to its elements as well as in terms of its characteristics of structure, function and change. In the following section, I will hypothetically map the three different types of understanding related to the mystical within the framework of the 'landscape of the soul'. I will begin with a short comment on the elements or subsystems found in a landscape. Then, I will look at the landscape structure, function and change, in turn, with the intent being to observe how the different understandings of the mystical may be related and interpreted.

3.5.1 The Elements in the Landscape

In exploring the metaphor of landscape and spiritual life, I enumerated a hypothetical set of elements or subsystems that might be found in a landscape of the soul. Elements such as neurology, physiology and psychology pertain to the person as a biosystem. History concerns the time period. The environment links the spatial dimension. Other people, culture, theology and philosophy are elements that relate to the socio-cultural environment and its abstract and human activity systems. These areas overlap and interact with one another to create a unique landscape.

The interrelationships between the elements in the system of the 'landscape of the soul' do not remain constant and unchanging. Thus, what is considered mystical at one time and place may vary. For example, in early Christian understanding the mystical concerned the mystery of God's love revealed in Christ and encountered through scripture and in the liturgy. When she wrote her treatise *The Interior Castle* for her sisters in monastic life, Teresa of Avila assumed that God was the focus of religious life and she drew upon familiar images related to the monarchical system of sixteenth-century Spain to describe the deepening relationship of the soul with God.

However, in the twentieth-century, the stages of psycho-spiritual development proposed by Daniel Helminiak belongs to an entirely different culture where God is not taken for granted and models are frequently drawn from the discipline of psychology. Nor can it be assumed that Helminiak's audience will be

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[103] J B Jackson, 1986, The Vernacular Landscape, in *Landscape Meanings and Values*, 79.

living or even familiar with a life revolving around the liturgy and daily prayer. Nevertheless, like Teresa of Avila, he is concerned with mapping the growth in mystical life. Whereas for Teresa the relationship with God is the prime focus, for Helminiak it is the psychological states of the individual. Thus, it can be seen see that, as the context changes, a shift can occur that affects which landscape element takes precedence or is emphasised. In the twentieth-century, the shift from relationship with God to altered states is clearly demonstrated in the philosophical and religious debates about the nature of mystical experience and neuro-psychological exploration into the human brain and human consciousness. With changing of time and place, how the elements in the 'landscape of the soul' are mapped and the importance that is attributed to them will vary.

The elements or subsystems found in a particular landscape interact and contribute to the distinctiveness of the landscape. If landscape is considered as an open system, it can be further studied in relation to its emergent structural features as well as with reference to its functional activities and the change that ensues with the transformations that occur within the system. In elaborating the model, I identified three networks composed of different interacting subsystems: a geology of experiencing, a geomorphology of growing and an ecology of relating. In the preceding sections of this chapter, I have correlated these networks with different understandings associated with mysticism. In this way, I have linked a geology of experiencing with mysticism as a distinct altered state of consciousness; a geomorphology of growing with mysticism as a stage in prayer or spiritual development; and an ecology of relating with mysticism as an encounter and relationship with God.

Now I intend to look at these conceptions in relation to the metaphor of landscape, in terms of landscape structure, function and change. Through this examination, I hypothesise that the contribution to the model of each type of understanding will be highlighted and that it will be possible to situate them within a wider understanding of spiritual life.

3.5.2 The Structure of the Landscape

The matrix, patches and corridors in a landscape are emergent properties

related to landscape structure. The elemental networks of geology, geomorphology and ecology contribute to each of these features.

Matrix

In elaborating the model with respect to spiritual life, I associated a geology of experiencing with both the matrix and patches in the structure of a landscape. In the landscape of the soul there is the underlying matrix related to the human biosystem. Thus, in some studies in the twentieth-century the mystical is delineated according to brain functioning or consciousness studies. Nevertheless, although a common matrix in terms of common factors in human physiology and psychology may exist, researches at this level have demonstrated that other factors interact with and influence experience and therefore the geology of experiencing, as this relates to altered states of consciousness, needs to be observed within a wider context.

As it was seen in the twentieth-century debates, what is considered mystical has been arbitrarily defined within particular discourses. Similarly, different types of experiences have been linked with the mystical at various times and places. For example, in the classical matrix concerned with the Mystery religions, the mystic was one who had been initiated into these Mysteries and who subsequently was expected to remain silent about the rites that were involved. When the early Christians adopted the word mystical, it was applied to the encounter with the mystery of God's love in Jesus Christ. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the mystical encounter with God was vouchsafed through visions as in the example of the twelfth century abbess Hildegard of Bingen.[104] Whether the patterns defining the mystical have been dictated by power structures as Grace Jantzen contends, what is important is that within a particular matrix certain patterns may be expected or common whilst others are deemed unacceptable or eccentric.[105] In addition, although what is considered mystical at the end of the twentieth-century is closely associated with altered states of consciousness detached from a religious context, this is a phenomenon that has

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[104] Benedicta Ward, 1990, Saints and Sybils: Hildegard of Bingen to Teresa of Avila, in *After Eve*, 105.
[105] Grace Jantzen, 1995, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 325.

gradually developed since the sixteenth century. It is for this reason that Bernard McGinn remarks that 'there are actually so few mystics in the history of Christianity that one wonders why Christians used the qualifier "mystical" so often...'[106]

Patches

In exploring the metaphor of landscape, I have suggested that the patches in a particular 'landscape of the soul' represent that which is unique to a person. Here factors in a person's neuro-physiology might incline them towards particular altered states of consciousness. However, such altered states occur within a particular matrix that will influence how they are perceived and interpreted. Thus, if such experiences are valued and seen to be revelations from God they may be fostered but where they are not part of the milieu, they may be questioned and suppressed. Although at any one time and place a common matrix may exist between groups of people, it is in the patches that the particular arises and through which it is articulated. It is in the patches of the 'landscape of the soul' that the twentieth-century understanding of mysticism as an altered state of consciousness can be seen to be the strongest: mystics have recorded different types of experiences which researchers have tried to analyse and classify. For example, Zaehner describes three types of mysticism – nature, monistic and theistic – according to the nature of the unitive experience. Altered states of consciousness can be induced or may occur suddenly. They can be prepared for as well as be unexpected. Although particular and distinctive in their personal manifestation, patches describing mystical experiences are closely linked with the matrix. Thus, in spiritual direction the geology of experiencing represented by patches needs to be evaluated against the landscape as a whole. This brings us to the ecology of relationships and the geomorphology of growing.

Corridors

Corridors in a landscape provide channels of communication. They link (or block and isolate) local ecological niches and facilitate the balance in the overall

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[106] Bernard McGinn, 1991, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, xvi.105.

ecology of relationships. The openness of an individual to the movements of God varies according the network of corridors in the 'landscape of the soul' and whether these corridors are conducive for communication or whether they act as barriers. The nature of corridors may vary. Traditionally for Christians, God was encountered through the meditative reading of scripture and through participation in the liturgy. For example, Grace Jantzen observes that for Bernard of Clairvaux, through scripture:

> The divine Word comes 'like a physician with oil and ointments' healing hurts and correcting distortions; sometimes 'he joins up as a traveller...on the road' and by his presence makes hardship or drudgery easier to bear; or perhaps he arrives like 'a magnificent and powerful king' bringing courage in a time of stress or temptation.[107]

The pictures of the encounter with God through scripture depicted by Bernard reveal different types of relationships. In modern research such as that at the Religious Experience Research Centre in Oxford, people have reported other channels through which they have experienced God such as music, literature and nature.[108] In addition, the mode of communication facilitated by corridors varies. Thus, for one person the principle mode of communication may be through the affirmation of images, praise and thanksgiving whereas for another person the mode may be through silence and the negation of images. Different corridors may be associated with distinct modes or a combination of modes. For example, in the Eucharistic liturgy God can communicate through the reading of scripture as well as in the bread and the wine. Corridors can also be seen ecologically. By this I mean that corridors can function to link different communities of species in a landscape. Therefore, in the 'landscape of the soul', the corridors can be perceived as facilitating a person's relationship with God as well as with other people in a wider network. The last point directs attention towards looking at the activities or movements within a landscape system. This brings us to the question of what is happening in a landscape, that is, its function.

3.5.3 The Function in the Landscape

In this thesis, landscape is considered as an open system. Therefore, it can

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[107] Grace M Jantzen, 1989, Mysticism and Experience, *Religious Studies* 25: 305.
[108] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 28.

be examined in terms of its inputs, transformations and subsequent outputs. Function in a landscape is related to the activity of the system and the transformations that occur through this activity. As has been seen, a particular system can be named – for example, a cabbage farm – and its activities elaborated – planting, cultivating, harvesting and distributing cabbages. What I now propose to do is to examine the function in the 'landscape of the soul' in two stages. First, I will name the systems and describe the activities that might be associated with mysticism seen through the metaphors of geology, geomorphology and ecology. I will include output in these descriptions, although later I will look at the output in relation to change in the landscape. Second, because landscape is a unit that can be identified in time and space as a whole, I will examine the different understandings of mysticism and the geology of experiencing, the geomorphology of growing and the ecology of relating with respect to the overall function of the landscape.

A Geology of Experiencing

Using the popular text *The Way of the Mystic*, the first understanding of the mystical that was identified considered it as an altered state of consciousness. I linked this understanding of mysticism with a geology of experiencing because of the focus upon subjective human experience. Therefore, I suggest that this understanding can be named as a system mapping the production of a particular type of subjective experience. The activities of this system include the disruption of consensus consciousness by the actions of God, the individual or natural forces accompanied by the deconstruction and/or reconstruction of consensus consciousness (depending upon philosophical perspective). The output of the system is an altered state of consciousness, defined as union.

This definition encapsulates the understanding of mysticism as a particular altered state of consciousness. Furthermore, this is, as Michel de Certeau observed, an experimental knowledge that has become detached from theology and tradition where it is God who is encountered. In this understanding, that which is considered mystical can be defined, classified and analysed. For example, as we saw, William James describes it as ineffable, noetic, transient and passive, whereas Ninian Smart

depicts the experience as timeless, imperceptible and transcendent.[109] R C Zaehner classifies mysticism according to a three-fold typology as nature, monistic or theistic and W T Stace according to a two-fold typology as introvertive or extrovertive.[110] Regardless of the attributes or classification, the underlying and unquestioned assumption is that the mystical is related to an altered state of consciousness. This experience is usually designated as union. However, a consensus does not exist about the nature of union. For example, the issues concerning whether a subject-object polarity is possible in mystical experience or whether there is a non-dualistic merging where the experience of subject-object is lost are both debated. Nevertheless, this altered state of consciousness forms the output of the geology of experiencing.

The input of this system is various – chemical, psychological, biophysical or transcendental. In Pressinger's work, the input is in the form of electrochemical impulses in the brain, whereas for Matheson it is hypnotic suggestions. For practitioners of different religious traditions, it is through techniques such as meditation, fasting and sensory deprivation that preparation is made for this transformation of consciousness whether conceived theistically as an encounter with God or non-theistically as merging into some form of ultimate reality. In the Christian tradition, it is argued that this state arises from the direct intervention of God without any mediation.[111] As was seen when extending the metaphoric model, the perception of landscape is correlated with the beliefs of the geographer as well as the resolution at which the landscape is examined. Thus, in the geology of experiencing, the input will vary according to the beliefs of the researcher. For example, the input might be mechanistic, as in the work of Pressinger, or a theistic belief in the direct intervention of God, as in the work of Augustin-François Poulain. Similarly, the inputs will vary according to the resolution at which the landscape is being examined. For example, the system can be considered at the level of neuro-physiology, as in the work of Pressinger, or at the level of the whole life of an

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[109] William James, 1902/1928, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 380-382; Ninian Smart, 1958, *Reasons and Faiths*, 71,75.
[110] R C Zaehner, 1961, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, 28; W T Stace, 1960, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 61.
[111] Augustin-François Poulain, 1910, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, 114-115.

individual, as in the work of Helminiak. When the mystical is understood in terms of an altered state of consciousness, the inputs to the system as well as the outputs are diverse and dependent upon the perspective of the landscape geographer.

Although both the inputs and the outputs in a geology of experiencing can vary according to the worldview and the operational definitions that are employed, the underlying process is the transformation of consciousness. The system begins with ordinary or consensus consciousness and an input is made into this system that results in a disruption of consciousness. Subsequently, the system is changed in some way – deconstructed/reconstructed, depending upon the philosophical viewpoint adopted. The outcome is that the self-model is experienced in terms of a unitive state, which is defined according to a particular set of phenomenological characteristics.

The principal activities that can be identified in this understanding of a geology of experiencing include the disrupting of everyday consciousness, the deconstructing of the self-model and its reconstruction, according to the philosophical view taken.[112] Thus, according to Ninian Smart and Robert Forman, once everyday consciousness has been disrupted, the self-model is deconstructed to create 'pure' consciousness, a state that is perceptionless, timeless and spaceless. In this view, the two main activities are disruption and deconstruction. However, if the philosophical position expounded by Steven Katz is adopted, the third activity is the reconstruction of the self-model according to the presuppositions that are held by the mystic.

From the perspective of a geology that is related to experiencing, what is happening in the 'landscape of the soul'? I suggest the activities of disruption and deconstruction/reconstruction are part of a process of apprehension within the wider network of experiencing. For a Christian, it is God who is apprehended in an experience described as union.

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[112] The induction of an altered state of consciousness involves the destabilisation of the system via disruptive forces, the application of patterning forces and finally, the construction of the new state. (Arnold M Ludwig, 1969, Altered States of Consciousness, 10-13; Charles T Tart, *States of Consciousness*, 70-87.)

A Geomorphology of Growing

Using the popular text, *Reality through the Looking-Glass*, the second understanding of the mystical that was identified considered it as a stage in prayer or spiritual life. I linked this understanding of mysticism with a geomorphology of growing because of the focus upon growth and development. Therefore, in exploring the function of the 'landscape of the soul', I suggest that this understanding can be named as a system systematically mapping changes occurring in prayer or psycho-spiritual development over a period of time. The activities of this system include apprehension and purification-illumination. The output of the system is a stage or prayer or spiritual life characterised by altered state of consciousness, defined as union.[113]

Like the geology of experiencing, the output of a geomorphology of growing is a particular state of consciousness called union. However, in this case the output is not limited to a particular experience at one point in time but represents a state of prayer or being which has been reached through a cumulative process of development. In prayer, illumination precedes the unitive state. In illumination, there is a deepening 'fellowship' with God; however, a person has not yet totally surrendered to God in a union of love.[114] As in the geology of experiencing, there is a lack of consensus about the nature of union. Thus, in Christian prayer fine distinctions are drawn between 'full union' where a distinction between subject and object is maintained and 'union without distinction' where subject-object duality disappears.[115]

If the geomorphology of growing is taken as representing a system of natural human development, the stance that Helminiak adopts, then the output is seen as the ultimate state of human psychological integration. In this case, a person has reached such a balance in psycho-spiritual development that he or she is in harmony

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[113] Although I have included psycho-spiritual growth in this system, the language of purification and illumination are not commonly used in twentieth-century schemes. Nevertheless, the processes associated with purification and illumination can be identified, albeit diffusely, in psycho-spiritual stage theories.

[114] In Helminiak's scheme, it can be postulated that a parallel is found in the compassionate stage where surrender is learnt (although he does not describe this as surrender to God).

[115] Nelson Pike, 1992, *Mystic Union*, 7-11, 28-40.

with self, the whole of creation and any transcendental system that may be part of his or her worldview.[116] As in the geology of experiencing, the output of the geomorphology of growing is considered to be an altered state, the conceptualisation of which is dependent upon the focus of study as well as the worldview.

In the geomorphology of growing, normal consciousness is disrupted over a period of time by the input to the system. In this way, the geomorphology of growing presupposes the geology of experiencing. Thus, the system of growing begins with the process of apprehension. However, the process of apprehension is not limited to an isolated event as in the geology of experiencing. Rather, the process of apprehension continues over time as a person grows in spiritual life and the life of prayer. In *Mysticism*, Evelyn Underhill describes the first stage of spiritual life as the 'awakening of the Self to consciousness of Divine Reality'.[117] Regardless of whether the awakening happens suddenly in a moment or gradually over years, it entails an alteration in self-understanding and in the perception of the world. In the geomorphology of growing, a theistic worldview is not necessarily assumed. Therefore, the input to the system can be variable as in the geology of experiencing. For instance, the initial 'awakening' could arise from the use of drugs, hypnosis or meditative techniques. Whatever the nature of the initial input to the system – natural, human or transcendental – for the developmental sequence to be initiated, a positive response must be made by the recipient.[118] Thus, a movement is established between the systems of apprehension and purification-illumination, the outcome of which is, depending upon the worldview, a state of union with a transcendental reality and a stage of psychological integration.

In the geomorphology of growing, the underlying process that is represented is still the transformation of consciousness, although this process is perceived in terms of growth over a period of time rather than as a distinct experience. What is happening in this transformation? Gregory of Nyssa describes the process as the

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[116] Daniel Helminiak, *Spiritual Development*, 88-89.
[117] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, 176 ff.
[118] In a humanistic scheme of spiritual growth, the disruption of the everyday consciousness marks the point where accepted beliefs are questioned. Although this is the third stage, the Conscientious Stage, in Helminiak's scheme of psycho-spiritual growth, he considers that it is the first true stage of spiritual development. (Daniel Helminiak, *Spiritual Development*, 84.)

removing of successive layers of clothing:

> After removing her old tunic and divesting herself of all further clothing, [the spouse of the Canticle] became much purer than she was. And yet, in comparison with this newly acquired purity, she does not seem to have removed her headcovering. Even after that complete stripping of herself she still finds something further to remove. So it is with our ascent towards God: each stage that we reach always reveals something heavy weighing on the soul. Thus in comparison with her new found purity, that very stripping of her tunic now becomes a kind of garment which those who find her must once again remove.[119]

Purification and illumination are concomitant. That is, as a person is enlightened by the grace of God, that person becomes aware of areas of separation from God. This leads to purification, further enlightenment and the recognition of other areas of separation. Thus, the spiral of purification-illumination is a continual activity in growth. Purification represents a time of self-discovery at all levels of being – physical, psychological and spiritual.[120] In many respects, the process of purification is a process of simplification involving the surrender of false motives, interests and conceptions. It involves the nurture of the gifts and talents as well as the establishment of new ways of thinking and behaviour through self-discipline and the cultivation of the virtues of love, faith, hope, humility and justice.[121] From a Christian perspective, through purification the self-system is transcended and transformed by being brought more and more into conformity with the will of God. From the perspective of stages of psychological development, Jane Loevinger observes that 'there is no highest stage but only an opening to new possibilities'.[122] Therefore, in the geomorphology of growing individual choice is crucial from the beginning and throughout the process of transformation, because at any point the individual can refuse to respond to the reality that is apprehended and thus become

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[119] Gregory of Nyssa quoted by Jean Daniélou, 1979, Introduction, in *From Glory to Glory*, 60.
[120] Evelyn Underhill, 1911/1942, *Mysticism*, 198-231.
[121] Ibid., 198-265.
[122] Jane Loevinger with Augusto Blasi, 1976, *Ego Development*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications, 26. For other descriptions of the openness or the final stage in human growth and development, see Abraham H Maslow, 1970, *Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences*, New York: The Viking Press, 19-29; James W Fowler, The Vocation of Faith Development Theory, in *Stages of Faith and Religious Development: Implications for Church, Education and Society*, eds. James W Fowler, Karl Ernst Nipkow and Friedrich Schweitzer, London: SCM Press, 200; Daniel A Helminiak, 1987, *Spiritual Development*, 89.

closed to 'those things that are before'.[123]

From the perspective of a geomorphology of growing, I suggest that the activities of apprehension and purification-illumination are part of the network of growth. For a Christian, it is God who is apprehended and within whom and towards whom a person grows.

An Ecology of Relating

I used the *Mystical Chorus* as a negative representation of the third understanding of the mystical. This understanding was identified as an encounter with God in Christ that occurs within a community of believers with their scriptures and liturgy. I linked this understanding of mysticism with an ecology of relating because the focus is upon God's love and the networks of relationships involved in its communication. Therefore, in exploring the function of the 'landscape of the soul', I suggest that this understanding of the mystical can be named as a system mapping the transformation of God's love. The activities of this system include apprehending, growing and loving. The output of the system is a union through love with God.

The ecology of relating is connected with those understandings of the mystical that consider it as the encounter with the mystery of God. The encounter with God reveals a new reality in which a person is invited to participate and this participation in or union with God is the ultimate output of the ecology of relating.[124] Unlike the outputs of the geology of experiencing or geomorphology of growing, it concerns a relationship rather than a particular altered state of consciousness although such states may occur.

The input to this system is God's self-revelation of love through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is God who initiates the encounter: 'We love because he first loved us' (1 John 4.19). However, an individual may prepare through meditation, fasting or other techniques. In terms of the landscape model, these can be seen as corridors of communication through which a person is open to

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[123] Gregory of Nyssa quoted by Jean Daniélou, 1979, Introduction, 268.
[124] For example, see Jean Daniélou, 1979, Introduction, 62.

God's self-communication.

The process associated with the ecology of relating is that transformation in love whereby a person's will becomes conformed to the will of God or, using the ideas drawn from John Macmurray, a person's actions conform to God's one action. Three activities are hypothesised: apprehending, growing and loving. As in the geology of experiencing and the geomorphology of growing, human consciousness is disrupted, in this case by God's self-revelation or as McFadyen says, God's call. Unlike the geology of experiencing, this disruption does not necessarily lead to or depend upon such altered states such as 'pure' consciousness. However, taking this slight variation into consideration, the ecology of relating presupposes the geology of experiencing. At this point, there is the choice to respond affirmatively or negatively. Thus, although the outpouring of God's love is a gift, its reception is contingent upon human choice.

In the ecology of relating, the underlying process that is represented involves the transformation of God's love. What does this involve? Like the geomorphology of growing, the process entails the ever-deepening spiral of purification-illumination. However, unlike the geomorphology of growing, the process does not end in a particular state or stage dependent upon altered states of consciousness. Rather, it is an ongoing process, rather like a dialogue where something new is continually emerging. This 'something new' could be described as the activity of love.

In the understanding of mysticism as the encounter with the mystery of God, which has been likened to an ecology of relating, love is the key dynamic. It is God's love that is apprehended and it is through love that the process of purification-illumination can occur. At the end of the *Revelations of Divine Love*, Julian of Norwich observes that she had long wondered what was the meaning of her visions. After fifteen years, she was given an answer:

> You would know our Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well. Love was his meaning. Who showed it you? Love. What did he show you? Love. Why did he show it? For love. Hold on to this and you will know and understand

love more and more. But you will not know or learn anything else - ever![125]

As Julian of Norwich proposes, love is central to an understanding of God's self-revelation. The two commandments that Christ gave his disciples were to love God with one's whole being and to love one's neighbour (Matt. 22.37-39). Hence, if through the encounter with God we are invited into a relationship, then such a relationship will be characterised by love. How the activities of love related to this interaction between God and the person are manifested will vary. Nevertheless, they will involve a single-minded focus on God, the imitation of Christ and the love and service of others.[126]

An ecology of relating includes within itself the geology of experiencing and emerges alongside the geomorphology of growing. In other words, the understanding of the mystical as an encounter and relationship with God accommodates that understanding of mysticism as an altered state of consciousness but is not limited by such states. Furthermore, it arises in relation to the mystical as a stage of development, but as this development unfolds in the present moment.

From the perspective of an ecology of relating, I suggest the activities of apprehension, purification-illumination and love are part of a process of loving. For a Christian, it is God who is apprehended and within whom and towards whom a person grows in a relationship characterised by love.

In the preceding, I have suggested a function and the activities related to this function for different types of understandings associated with mysticism – mysticism as an altered state of consciousness, a stage in growth and development and as a relationship. Before moving on to examine these conceptions of mysticism in conjunction with change in a landscape, I will look at each understanding in relation to the function of a landscape as a whole. In this way it will be possible to see further how each of these ways of interpreting mysticism may contribute to the landscape.

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[125] Julian of Norwich, 1966, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Clifton Wolters, London: Penguin Books, 86: 2.
[126] William Johnston, 1995, *Mystical Theology*, 199.

The Function of the Landscape as a Whole

The function of a landscape tells us what is happening within the landscape. When I looked at Christian life using the landscape model, I postulated that the function was represented by our transformation through the grace of God into union with God in Christ. Furthermore, this transformation was depicted as a spiral of love. If we believe that God sustains all that is, then in effect we are already united with God. Moreover, through Baptism a person is baptised into the death and resurrection of Christ and so incorporated into the body of Christ. Thus, Paul writes that 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me (Gal. 2.19b-20a). Although it can be claimed that we are already united with God in Christ, nevertheless the full realisation of this union is not yet and hence there is the activity of being transformed into the likeness of God. At the beginning of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, John of the Cross observes that God dwells substantially in every soul.[127] However, he continues by observing that 'the soul's union with and transformation in God ...does not always exist, except when there is likeness of love'.[128] According to John of the Cross, union occurs when 'God's will and the soul's are in conformity, so that nothing in the one is repugnant to the other'.[129] In extending the metaphor of landscape, I suggested that this conformity of wills could also be considered as the unity of action. Thus, the function of the 'landscape of the soul' was depicted as a transformation in love through which the soul is brought into union with God.

William Johnston states that 'mysticism that is not rooted and grounded in love cannot be called Christian'.[130] He observes that:

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[127] John of the Cross observes this at the beginning of the Ascent of Mount Carmel where he writes:

> To understand the nature of this union, one should first know that God sustains every soul and dwells in it substantially, even though it may be that of the greatest sinner in the world. This union between God and creatures always exists. By it he conserves their being so that if the union should end they would immediately be annihilated and cease to exist. (John of the Cross, 1991, *The Ascent Of Mount Carmel*, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriquez, Washington, D. C.: ICS Publications, Ascent 2.5.3.)

[128] Ibid., 2.5.3.

[129] John of the Cross, 1991, *The Ascent Of Mount Carmel*, 2.5.3.

[130] William Johnston, 1995, *Mystical Theology*, London: Harper Collins Publishers, 61.

> If your contemplation is authentically mystical...then your being will be filled with a powerfully active love. Yes, at the core of your being is a movement of love, a thrust of love, an unconditional and unrestricted love.[131]

Contemplation is an attitude characterised by 'self-forgetting attention' and a 'humble receptiveness' that pervades all the activities of life whether in the hectic workplace or in quiet moments of prayer.[132] According to Johnston, if this attitude is mystical then it is characterised by a 'movement of love'. In the model, the function of the 'landscape of the soul' concerns this 'movement of love'. It is possible to explore this transformational activity in greater detail than hitherto through the different understandings associated with the mystical.

In the geology of experiencing, the mystical was perceived to be a particular type of altered state such as 'pure' consciousness. Bernard Lonergan proposed that a theological method be based on cognition. He assumed that there is a movement in human life towards self-transcendence. Underlying this process, Lonergan identifies different levels of consciousness which are related to the transcendental precepts: Be Attentive, Be Intelligent, Be Reasonable and Be Responsible. According to Lonergan, the climax of these precepts occurs when a person falls in love:

> Then one's being becomes being-in-love. Such being-in-love has its antecedents, its causes, its conditions, its occasions. But once it has blossomed forth and as long as it lasts, it takes over. It is the first principle. From it flow one's desires and fears, one's joys and sorrows, one's discernment of values, one's decisions and deeds.[133]

Lonergan identifies different types of love such as romantic love, parental love and fraternal love. However, love of God transcends these and 'is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality'.[134] Love effects a radical alteration in consciousness, that is, in our everyday ways of knowing and decision-making. According to Lonergan, being-in-love 'sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing'.[135] With this transformation of consciousness God may be experienced in the 'landscape of the soul' in ways that may not be explicable in everyday consciousness or language.

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[131] William Johnston, 1988, *Being in Love: The Practice of Christian Prayer*, London: Fount, 58.
[132] F C Happold, 1970, *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology*, London: Penguin Books, 70.
[133] Bernard J F Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 105.
[134] Ibid., 105.
[135] Ibid., 106.

Therefore, not abandoning the link of the mystical with an altered state of consciousness and at the same time keeping in mind that the transformational activity in the 'landscape of the soul' is love, I suggest that it might be appropriate to conceive this altered state as that of 'being-in-love'.

In the geomorphology of growing, the mystical was seen in terms of stages in growth and development and a process of purification-illumination was recognised. What occurs through the process of purification is the radical reorientation of a person's life, the loss of the centrality of the self-system and a concomitant increase in simplicity as all that is not God or separates a person from God is stripped away. Earlier, I compared solar radiation with Lonergan's idea that God is like background music. However, if God's love is like background music, what is variable is the person's attention. Thus, through the process of purification-illumination, there is a growth in attentiveness to God. James Robertson Price observes that the goal of mystical life is to 'become progressively more attentive to what has in fact been going on all along'.[136] Maintaining the concept of the mystical as indicative of a process of development and that the function of the 'landscape of the soul' is the transformation in love, the geomorphology of growing could be seen as the deepening and honing of attention to the love of God.

Finally, in elaborating the model I suggested an ecology of relating which named a system of encounter and relationship with God that included the activities of apprehending, growing and loving. God's love is at the heart of the transformational process in the 'landscape of the soul' and God invites an individual into a personal relationship, that is, a relationship of mutual self-giving in freedom where the interests and good of the other are made into one's own. This identification needs to be unconditional because if there are expectations of some sort of return, then the relationship would be contractual.[137] Thus, in a personal relationship with God:

> God bestows value in loving man despite his imperfections. Man bestows value in recognizing the infinite goodness of God and delighting in it. They reciprocate within a community of bestowals.[138]

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[136] James Robertson Price III, 1985, Lonergan and the Foundation of a Contemporary Mystical Theology, in *Lonergan Workshop V*, ed. Fred Laurence, Chico, California: Scholars Press, 176.
[137] Vincent Brümmer, 1993, *The Model of Love*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 164-165.
[138] Irving Singer quoted by Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love*, 242.

3. Thematic Mapping

One cannot fully comprehend the activity of transformation in love unless one appreciates that the 'community of bestowals' is the dynamic at the heart of a mutual exchange of love. That is, God's love is freely given to a person and the person freely returns God's love. It is through this dynamic that a person's will or action is conformed to the will or action of God. Granted the understanding of the mystical as an encounter with the mystery of God in Christ and remembering that the transformational activity in the 'landscape of the soul' is love, then the ecology of relating could be seen as a mutual self-giving in an exchange of love.

Before proceeding, it is important to establish that the union in love with God does not exclude love for other people. As Vincent Brümmer observes, mysticism is frequently confused with an attitude in which love of God excludes love for the rest of creation or treats others as objects to be loved for their usefulness. If the relationship of love bestows value on an irreplaceable other in a mutual exchange, then love for one person is incommensurable with love for another person. In this way, love is non-hierarchical. Thus, each relationship of love is unique and in each it is necessary to love 'in whatever way is relevant to the other's reality and our own'.[139] So it is with our love for God. A person's love for God is exclusive in that it is a love that no other love can fill.[140]

If the transformational process of the soul in the 'landscape of the soul' is reviewed with reference to the preceding thematic exploration, a number of activities can be identified. First, as in the understanding of the mystical as an altered state of consciousness, a disruption and deconstruction/reconstruction of consciousness occurs. However, because it is assumed that for a Christian the transformation in the 'landscape of the soul' is one of love, I suggest that this disruption and deconstruction/reconstruction of consciousness is the recreation of a consciousness that could be described in Lonergan's terms as being-in-love. Second, similar to the understanding of mysticism as a stage in prayer or psycho-spiritual growth in which a person is gradually purified, a directional dimension can be recognised. This was designated as an ever-deepening attentiveness to the love of God. Finally, with respect to the understandings of the mystical as a relationship with God, the

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[139] Irving Singer quoted by Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love*, 214.
[140] Ibid., 212.

transformational activity in the 'landscape of the soul' was perceived as a mutual self-giving in the exchange of love. Furthermore, this exchange overflows into a person's whole life so that through the fruits of the Spirit the exchange of love is manifested in the world.

With this last point, we move now to the final characteristic of a landscape: change.

3.5.4 Change in the Landscape of the Soul

Over time, the structure and function of a physical landscape may change. Thus, through the collision of the tectonic plates of the earth mountain ranges can be pushed up. Or through the introduction of irrigation schemes, desert places are made productive. In the terminology of systems, change is also reflected in the output of the landscape where the question addressed is not only what is happening, but also what has happened.

In this chapter, I have been looking at three different ways in which mysticism can be understood. It has been proposed that the overall function of the 'landscape of the soul' represents the transformation of the person in love and that the output of this process is seen as union with God in Christ. Although with each of the understandings that I have examined the output would be acknowledged as union, each described it differently. When mysticism is linked with particular experiences as in a geology, the output in the landscape is an altered state of consciousness. Similarly, if it is connected with a geomorphology of growth and development, the landscape is also seen in terms of altered states. However, when mysticism is associated with an ecology of relating, the output is comprised of intentional actions relevant to a personal relationship with God.

Like geographers, the persons involved in spiritual direction are engaged in discerning changes in the 'landscape of the soul'. However, the criteria for evaluation will differ with the type of landscape. If union with God is an experience, then a person's experiences may be examined according to a particular set of characteristics. Similarly, if union with God is seen as a state of development in prayer or life, then what is happening in a person's prayer or life could be weighed

against the patterns delineated for each state. Or if union is seen as a relationship, then the fruits of the Spirit may be used to appraise the quality of this relationship. Therefore, in spiritual direction, how we perceive the landscape will influence the process of discernment.

I suggest that to limit union with God to altered states of consciousness or stages of development is problematic. Therefore, to assess the validity of using altered states as our sole indication of the mystical, I will examine three questions: Are all alleged mystical experiences mystical? Is there a mysticism without experiences? And have we limited the activity of God?

Through these questions I intend to demonstrate that although altered states of consciousness or different stages in prayer or life may be present in the 'landscape of the soul' they are secondary to a wider understanding where the encounter with Christ, or in the larger sense, with God, constitutes the mystical in the 'landscape of the soul'.

Are all Alleged Mystical Experiences Mystical?

Earlier in this chapter, I recounted the story of the student who, having had an experience of an altered state, assumed that she was now a mystic. This young woman believed that to have an experience of merging with God was to become a Christian mystic. However, it is not clear that it is the case that all the experiences reported to be mystical are themselves mystical.

In the twentieth-century researchers in psychology, comparative religions and philosophy have progressively narrowed the defining properties of what is considered mystical. Variations can be found around the idea that a mystical experience is one that is timeless, spaceless and perceptionless. However, other phenomena such as trances, visions, voices, dreams and a sense of presence are also loosely associated with the mystical. Although such states are acknowledged by Christian mystics, such experiences are generally considered untrustworthy. Nevertheless, these peripheral states may be important in the spiritual growth and development of a particular individual as both Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila attest. Julian of Norwich stresses that such experiences are a means towards greater

love of God:

> I am good only insofar as I love God the better: if you love God more than do I then you are by that much better than I.... It was certainly not shown me because God loved me more than other lowly souls in grace, for I am quite sure there must be many who have never had any sort of revelation or vision beyond the ordinary teaching of Holy Church, and who yet love God better than I. When I look at myself in particular I am obviously of no account, but by and large I am hopeful, for I am united in love with all my fellow Christians.[141]

Mystical experiences can deepen the insight and understanding of a person, but according to Julian they are not necessary. She stresses that revelations do not indicate that a person is special nor do such experiences guarantee an increase of love by God.

When altered states of consciousness are used as the criterion for evaluating the mystical, self-deception is possible. For example, various mechanisms and techniques can be used to induce some of the states of consciousness recorded in different types of prayer. John of the Cross was aware that pseudo-mystical states could be self-induced. Hence, one of the reasons he gives for discounting phenomena such as visions and voices as well as feelings is that a person may be deceived either by his or her self or by the Devil.[142] In addition, John of the Cross recognises the potential danger of misinterpreting altered states. In *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, he counsels the rejection of visions and all sense-related phenomena because such experience can be corrupted through the individual's own imperfections.[143] By rejecting such phenomena outright, a person is spared the task of discernment. Although altered states of consciousness do accompany certain forms of prayer, such states are not necessarily correlated with spiritual authenticity. Hence, John of the Cross points beyond particular types of subjective experiences to the way of life of the individual.

If the output of the 'landscape of the soul' is considered solely in terms of altered states as well as the possibility of deception, there is also the danger of confusion with pathological conditions. Altered states of consciousness associated

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[141] Julian of Norwich, 1966, *Revelations of Divine Love*, 9.1.
[142] John of the Cross, 1991, *The Dark Night*, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, 2.2.3.
[143] John of the Cross, 1991, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, 2.17.7.

with the mystical have been compared to psychosis and described in terms of hallucination, delusion, mania and disassociation, as well as particular neurological disorders.[144] Similarly, the 'dark night of the soul' has been equated with depression.[145] With observations such as these, it is incumbent that altered states be examined with reference to context.

The mystical experience that Aldous Huxley reported in *The Doors of Perception* was drug-induced.[146] Zaehner inferred that if Huxley's mysticism was equated with religious mysticism then the 'vision of God of the mystical saint is one and the same as the hallucination of the lunatic'.[147] Accordingly, in *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, he argued that the ultimate test of true mysticism is personal transformation and sanctification.[148] Although, following Paul, the fruits of the Spirit have been used as indicators of a spiritual life, their manifestation and recognition in life is conditional (Gal 5. 16-26). For example, in his study of the shift from 'holy anorexia' to '*ancilla dei*' of medieval women saints, Rudolf Bell shows that sanctification is a social variable.[149] Similarly, Andrew Neher suggests that one of the differences between the mystic and the psychotic is the social acceptance and affirmation of the mystic's experiences. For example, the experiences of Sri Ramakrisna were perceived as possession and insanity until they were reinterpreted and legitimised by the community.[150] When the mystical is delineated by altered states of consciousness, these states need to be authenticated within the community as well as in the life of the mystic.

In two of the understandings related to the mystical that I highlighted, the mystical was linked with altered states of consciousness. If such experiences are

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[144] Andrew Neher, *The Psychology of Transcendence*, 290.
[145] In The Dark Side of Mysticism: Depression and 'The Dark Night', Mary Jo Meadow examines the 'Dark Night' with reference to clinical depression. She relates characteristics associated with depression to the lives of Dag Hammarskjold and Simone Weil and suggests that a mystical orientation provided an alternative to breakdown. Nevertheless, the mystic way is risky as is highlighted in a Bengali saying: 'The sides of the mountain are strewn with the bones of those who fail to reach the top'. (Mary Jo Meadow, 1984, The Dark Side of Mysticism: Depression and 'The Dark Night', *Pastoral Psychology* 33(2): 123.)
[146] Aldous Huxley, 1954/1994, *The Doors of Perception; Heaven and Hell*, London: Flamingo, 5-7.
[147] R C Zaehner, 1961, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, xiii.
[148] Ibid., 29.
[149] Rudolf Bell, 1985, *Holy Anorexia*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 179.
[150] Andrew Neher, 1980/1990, *The Psychology of Transcendence*, 291.

examined with respect to change in the 'landscape of the soul', then their consequences need to be examined. The mystic's *nada* is not an abandonment of reality.[151] In altered states of consciousness associated with the mystical, discursive and analytic processes of thought are transcended, but are not rejected. For example, in his discussion of schizophrenia and mysticism, Kenneth Wapnick observes that in contrast to genuine mystical experience, in psychosis reason is deposed. Consequently, when Wapnick compares the experiences of Teresa of Avila with Lara Jefferson, a psychiatric patient, he shows that for Lara the state of emptiness created a situation where the biblical 'seven devils' were invited to enter into the void. She abandoned rationality and was possessed by a 'massive and powerful...thing that...was not I'.[152] There is a transcending of reason and self-surrender for both the mystic and the psychotic. The difference between the two states can be observed in the relationship between rational and non-rational elements as well as in discerning 'to whom' or 'to what' self-surrender is made. Moreover, when Wapnick compares the life journeys of Teresa of Avila and Lara Jefferson, he observes that Teresa maintained contact with and continued to function effectively within her environment whereas Lara lost control and her ability to function socially broke down.[153] Therefore, altered states of consciousness do not necessarily indicate an encounter with God. They may be indicative of an abdication of reality or engagement with forces other than God.

Philip Woollcott and Prakash Desai suggest that mysticism may be considered on a continuum of experience with 'higher' or fuller and 'lower' or incomplete forms. These types of subjective experiences can be distinguished according to parameters such as the quality of perception and the degree of integration, as well as ethical development. In fuller mystical experience, there is a paradoxical loss and finding of self. After the experience of union, when the insights from the experience are harmonised within the life of a person, radical changes in values and lifestyle can ensue. However, integration is not a certainty. The appeal of

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[151] See John of the Cross, 1991, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 13.1-13.

[152] Kenneth Wapnick, 1980, Mysticism and Schizophrenia, In *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods, London: the Athlone Press: 331.

[153] This integration of experiences into everyday life is an important element in the shamanic tradition. (Christine and Stanislav Grof, Spiritual Emergency, The Understanding and Treatment of Transpersonal Crises, *ReVision* 8(2): 11.)

experiences of transcendence may become addictive and lead towards psychosis. A person can become addicted to the experience of bliss, union and self-transcendence and then instead of integrating the experience into life, there is the desire to escape life for a repeat of the experience.[154]

It is possible that the creativity arising out of a unitive experience can be bent into the service of a manic sense of power that is divisive and dehumanising. There exists the danger that compassion will turn to scapegoating and ethical responsibility become moralistic, compulsive behaviour. In highlighting the positive aspects of mysticism, it needs to be remembered that certain unhealthy elements can remain present in any particular mystic's life or lifestyle. Nevertheless, Woollcott and Desai conclude that:

> A so called mystic experience that leads away from relationships with others and the world, or one that divides relationships between the all good and the all bad, between the holy and the evil, is a false or pathological mysticism.[155]

In isolation, altered states of consciousness whether occurring as single experiences or in the process of prayer do not attest to an encounter with God. Because such experiences may be induced, misinterpreted or misused, they provide an inadequate criterion upon which to base union with God.

Therefore, if we are considering the outcome of the system in the 'landscape of the soul' and evaluating change in the landscape, where altered states of consciousness occur, they are secondary to the whole life that is lived in relationship with God amidst a wider community. This does not mean that altered states of consciousness are not related to the encounter with the mystery of God. Indeed, the change of altered states in the life of prayer have been mapped in works such as the *Interior Castle* by Teresa of Avila or *The Spiritual Canticle* by John of the Cross, but in these works attention is upon God. With the landscape model, the conception of union with God as an altered state of consciousness is displaced from a central position by a focus on relationship with God seen within the context of a community.

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[154] Edward Mitchell Podvoll, 1979, Psychosis and the Mystic Path, *Psychoanalytic Review* 66(4): 583.
[155] Philip Woollcott, Jr. and Prakash Desai, 1990, Religious and Creative States of Illumination: A Perspective from Psychiatry, in *Religious and Ethical Factors in Psychiatric Practice*, ed. Don Browning, Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 258.

Is there a Mysticism without Experience?

In the foregoing discussion, it was seen that altered states, whether as single experiences or as part of a process of prayer, do not necessarily indicate an encounter or union with God. Therefore, it was concluded that it was not sufficient to see the output of the landscape system solely in terms of altered states. Although such states may act as signposts, it could be queried whether they are necessary indicators of union with God in Christ. In other words, is there a mysticism without experience?

Not only does the association between the mystical and a particular type of experience contrast with the early Christian tradition, it also contrasts with the understanding which those who are mystics apply to practical situations. In the *Interior Castle*, Teresa of Avila depicts the journey of the soul as it travels through seven multi-roomed mansions to the centre of a castle where God dwells. Although she describes different degrees of mystical prayer, she is aware that revelations, visions or extraordinary experiences are not necessarily correlated with the encounter and transformation in God's love.[156] In practice, union with God may occur without the experiences associated with mystical prayer. For instance, in the *Way of Perfection*, Teresa of Avila recounts the story of an old nun who came to her in great distress because she could not practise mental forms of prayer:

> I asked her what prayers she said, and *from her reply* I saw that, though keeping to the Paternoster, she was experiencing pure contemplation, and the Lord was raising her to be with Him in union. She spent her life so well, too, that her actions made it clear she was receiving great favours. So I praised the Lord and envied her vocal prayer.[157]

Teresa is quite clear in this passage that 'pure contemplation' and 'union', as she understands them, are not necessarily linked to particular forms of prayer. Although the mystical encounter of the sister with God cannot be subjectively described, its transforming effect can be objectively observed in her life. Just as union is not limited to particular stages of mystical prayer, similarly it is not restricted to a monastic life-style. Teresa of Avila's pithy statement that 'the Lord walks among the pots and pans' was part of her observation that activity does not preclude union with

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[156] Teresa of Avila, 1946, *Book of Foundations*, in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, 4.8.
[157] Teresa of Avila, 1946, *Book Called Way of Perfection*, in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, 30.7.

God.[158]

Ruth Burrows, a contemporary Carmelite Abbess, has come to the conclusion that although mysticism is linked with altered states of consciousness, in reality, mysticism has nothing to do with such states.[159] As an Abbess and spiritual director, Burrows was confronted with two women who did not conform to the books on spiritual life and the progressive stages in prayer that are depicted. Claire experiences an extraordinary form of prayer. Although suspicious of such prayer, Burrows observed that Claire is a woman of 'profound humility and total surrender to God. Only God matters to this woman. She is immersed in God. Jesus lives in her'.[160] Petra is an ordinary woman and there was nothing to single her out. Yet Claire claimed that Petra was a mystic: 'Petra never says 'no' to God, is always looking to him to see what he wants and, chief of all, accepts to be totally poor, to have no holiness of her own'.[161] Claire's claim is based on Petra's life rather than on stages of prayer. When questioned, Petra confirmed her certitude of union with God although she does not see or feel it. From these observations, Burrows suggests that there are two modes of mystical union with God: 'light off' and 'light on'.[162] Of these two, she suggests that the 'light off' mode is normal. Here union is not perceived except in the effects of the person's life, that is, in the fruits of the Spirit.

When mysticism is understood in terms of geology as an experience or in terms of geomorphology as a stage of growth, one would look for the presence of altered states in the output of the landscape system. However, as seen earlier, the presence of such states does not necessarily indicate union with God and now we can see that the absence of such states does not mean that union has not occurred. Thus, altered states provide an unreliable indicator of union with God. What is clear from the stories of Claire and Petra is the absolute centrality of God in their lives. For the majority of people, union with God will probably be a 'light off' experience.[163] Therefore, by understanding the mystical in terms of relationship with God, union

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[158] Teresa of Avila, 1946, *Book of Foundations*, in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, 5.8.
[159] Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, 3.
[160] Ibid., 3.
[161] Ibid., 3.
[162] Ibid., 45.
[163] Ibid., 46.

with God is more fully discernible.

Have We Limited the Activities of God? Those Who Have Been Excluded

By the age of five, God had become the 'burning reality' of Claire's life.[164] This simple statement brings us to one final observation of the change in system of the 'landscape of the soul'. In the geomorphology of a landscape, change is observed over time and hence I linked stages of growth and development in mysticism with a geomorphology of growing. However, if a theory such as Daniel Helminiak's is examined, it is discovered that he eliminates children from having a spiritual life on the grounds of their limited capacity for decision-making. Hence, he excludes children from the possibility of attaining to his mystical stage in life. Therefore, what are we to do with children like Claire? Moreover, if children are excluded because of their reasoning abilities, what about the mentally handicapped? Furthermore, what happens for a person with dementia? In these exclusions, have we limited the activity of God to only certain types of landscapes? In the following, I will briefly consider the case of children.

In *Spiritual Development*, Daniel Helminiak links spirituality with authentic self-transcendence arising through the transcendental precepts 'Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible'.[165] He argues that only adults have the reflective and critical decision-making capabilities necessary for authentic self-constitution. Children, he writes, 'unthinkingly and unknowingly and so without responsibility, uncritically caught up in the world of intimates, 'go along with'

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[164] Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, 48.
[165] Daniel A Helminiak, 1987, *Spiritual Development*, 22-23.

whatever is offered'.[166] This attitude underestimates the capabilities of children as well as over-emphasises cognitive processes.[167]

Helminiak's assumption that spiritual growth is an adult phenomenon emerging around adolescence is not unique. The difference which arises between theoretical models and the practical situation is due, in part, to methodology as well as to presuppositions. Since the work of Piaget, cognition has underpinned most developmental theories. Yet, one of the common criticisms of Piaget's model of cognitive development is that the methods which he used underestimated children's abilities.[168] Just as the method of experimentation can affect the results, so too the

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[166] Daniel A Helminiak, *Spiritual Development*, 37. Helminiak refers to Max Scheler in support of his thesis that children have no choice in deciding who they are and what they will become:

> The ideas, feelings and tendencies which govern the life of a child, apart from general ones such as hunger and thirst, are initially confined entirely to those of his immediate environment, his parents and relatives, his elder brothers and sisters, his teachers, his home, his people, and so on. Imbued as he is with 'family feeling,' his own life is at first almost completely hidden from him. Rapt, as it were, and hypnotized by the ideas and feelings of this concrete environment of his, the only experiences which succeed in crossing the threshold of his inner awareness are those which fit a kind of channel for the stream of his mental environment. Only very slowly does he raise his mental head, as it were, above this stream flooding over it, and find himself as a being who also, at times, has feelings, ideas and tendencies of his own...(Max Scheler quoted by Daniel A Helminiak, 1989, *Spiritual Development*, 37)

Scheler continues his argument that because a child lacks sufficient objectivity and detachment from the environment, it is impossible for a child to 'understand the passing of a judgement or the expression of an emotion' and consequently, the child unconsciously and uncritically goes along with what is dictated.

[167] An article entitled 'A Far Cry from Westminster' which appeared in *The Independent Magazine* on Saturday, 4th May, 1996, describes a children's parliament established in the Rajasthan desert. The children, aged 11 to 14, formed two political parties with their respective ministers. Although the Rajasthan parliament began as an educational project in order to teach the children about politics and the electoral process, the children have been given the responsibility for making decisions involving such areas as finance, education, water resources and women's development. Many of the children who participate in the parliament work as shepherds and farm labourers during the day and attend school at night. Thus, they are already active participants in their community. In the article, it is observed that:

> In the West, life is seen as a straight line from cradle to grave; in Indian philosophy, it is a cycle governed by the laws of karma. Thus, in Rajasthan society, children are not seen as a separate or lesser category of person. The Western concept of coming of age at 18 is meaningless; most people don't know how old they are. Maybe an outsider's surprise at the maturity of these children playing 'adult' roles in work and politics says more about Western prejudices, against children and their capabilities, than it does about the grass-roots reality of desert life.

This reflection by Lotte Hughes encapsulates the negativity that is found in Helminiak's attitude towards the capability of children.

[168] Lois Hoffman, Scott Paris, and Elizabeth Hall, 1994, *Developmental Psychology Today*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 39-45.

types of questions that are asked will also influence the responses that are given. In her book, *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan observed that the questions used in interviews can be interpreted in more than one way. Moreover, even an observer's moods, habits and expectations will be influential. Thus, if children are conceived as immature, uncritical, incompetent versions of adults, then, to a certain extent, research findings will reflect this attitude. Anna Freud, in a conversation with Robert Coles, made this point when she said:

> At other moments you'll be further afield [from psychoanalytic child psychiatry]; you'll be having talks about philosophy and theology - and children can hold up rather well, sometimes, in those kinds of discussions, provided that the adult doesn't *assume too little* of the child being interviewed.[My italics][169]

She told Robert Coles that in studying children's spirituality, he would need to drop his preconceptions and allow the children to 'do with the opportunity what they will'.[170] Alister Hardy in the Foreword to *The Original Vision* by Edward Robinson observes that spiritual life is a fundamental part of human nature. The conversations with children which Robert Coles records and the narratives sent to the Alister Hardy Research Centre both confirm that spiritual experiences and questioning do occur in early childhood, and that for some, like Claire, it is here that their life in relationship with God begins.

For Helminiak, children's capabilities for spiritual growth are correlated with their cognitive abilities. He considers children as unquestioningly immersed within their environmental matrix. Yet Robert Coles in his conversations with children has found them wrestling with the 'eternal questions...more intensely, unremittingly and subtly than we sometimes imagine'.[171] Insofar as the spiritual life of children is interwoven with the whole of their mental lives, it could be argued that their capacity for expression is circumscribed by limited experience and by lack of linguistic skills. For example, one of the correspondents to the Alister Hardy Research Centre recorded a childhood experience of unity with all of creation that

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[169] Robert Coles, 1990, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, London: Harper Collins, 99.
[170] Robert Coles interviewed children in the United States, Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. These children represented a diversity of religious backgrounds - Christian, Jewish, and Islamic - as well as none. (Ibid., 100).
[171] Ibid., 37.

was triggered by observing and meditating upon a colony of ants. However, as a five-year-old, the experience could only be described as 'We're like ants, running about on a giant's tummy!' [172] Nevertheless, the experience was noetic and in retrospect could be seen to have influenced the person's whole life. Although children's linguistic abilities and the range of experiences that they may draw upon are limited, Robert Coles observes that 'the discourse of children rivals that of Christian saints, such as Augustine and Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross'.[173]

In *The Original Vision*, Edward Robinson examined the reports of childhood experiences that were sent to the Religious Experience Research Centre. Many of the correspondents located the beginning of their spiritual life in childhood experiences:

> I just know that the whole of my life has been built on the great truth that was revealed to me then (at the age of 6).
>
> As far back as I can remember I have never had a sense of separation from the spiritual force I now choose to call God.[174]

Some of the reports recorded experiences that have been described as mystical by some twentieth-century researchers in comparative religion or philosophers of religion:

> I cannot agree with you that emerging into self-consciousness means to feel yourself as an individual being. On the contrary, you seem to lose your individuality and to dissolve into something far greater and wider that includes all individuals.[175]

Robinson followed up the original reports with an additional survey in order to learn more about these early experiences. The replies embrace the subtleties of paradox - dependence/independence, self/non-self, importance/insignificance and choice/no-choice. What emerges is that children do have experiences that have been linked to altered states of consciousness. In addition, their conscious spiritual lives often begin at a very early age. Moreover, like Claire they can experience a unity with God that is subsequently maintained throughout their lives. As Claire observes, what changed

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[172] Quoted by Edward Robinson, 1977, *The Original Vision*, Manchester College, Oxford: The Religious Experience Research Unit, 12-13.
[173] Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, 108.
[174] Edward Robinson, *The Original Vision*, 11.
[175] Ibid., 113-114.

was not the experience of unity but herself as she surrendered more and more to God.[176]

Although Helminiak traced stages of spiritual development, he made no comments on the life of prayer that might be associated with inner growth. A twelve-year-old girl whom Coles interviewed had become a paraplegic as a result of an automobile accident. She loved to pray and described her experience:

> There will be times when I honestly don't know what happens: the praying goes to my head, and I gets lost, I think - it's like, well, He comes and takes me, and I'm no longer thinking and talking, I'm just someplace else, I don't know where...[177]

This account suggests an experience of rapture where the soul experiences itself to be lifted in an upward direction out of itself. Such descriptions in prayer have been associated with the passive night of the senses when the soul is being purified for the spiritual marriage but at this point is not physically or psychologically prepared.[178] Although this girl desires to be healed, she says:

> But He's watching, and I'm waiting, and I just hope I can have a second with him, and He might touch my legs then, or he might not: it's all the same to me...[179]

Here, in the simplicity of a young girl's statement, there is a glimpse of the detachment which Ignatius of Loyola describes in his 'Principle and Foundation' – 'for our part, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short one...'.[180] In this report, prayer for this girl was essentially a meeting with God, and healing only a secondary factor.

The unitive vision as a lived reality is one of the features present in Helminiak's final stage of spiritual development. In an eight-year-old Hopi girl named Natalie, Coles encountered a child who was 'in harmony with [her]self and with all else'. Coles describes Natalie's spirituality as 'lived in the everyday'. He adds that her sense of 'spirit' involved a visionary affirmation: the sight of others going through their appointed rounds and rhythms, and the sight of herself doing

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[176] Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, 48.
[177] Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, 200-201.
[178] John of the Cross, 1991, *The Spiritual Canticle*, 13.2.6.
[179] Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, 201.
[180] Ignatius Loyola, 1968, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, 47-48.

likewise'.[181] Natalie had not only internalised the traditions of her people, she had shaped them into a vision of a cosmic dance which included all peoples and the whole of creation.[182]

The foregoing accounts of childhood experiences or interviews with children demonstrate examples of the three types of understanding of the mystical that I have been elaborating in this chapter. There are experiences of altered states, of stages in prayer or life that have been associated with the mystical, as well as the encounter with God in prayer. Thus, children's lives cannot be excluded from the consideration of the 'landscape of the soul'.[183] The accounts also indicate that those who listen to the stories of children need to be open and to set aside prejudices about children as Coles was advised. The point to be made is that we cannot limit the movements of God.

Throughout this chapter, using the model of landscape, I have been exploring different understandings that have become associated with the word mysticism. The 'landscape of the soul' has been considered as a system in which the input is the love of God, the function, the transformation of a person through love, and the output union with God, where union is seen as a conformity in love between a person and God. In the preceding section, we have looked at the output of this system with respect to the landscape characteristic of change. When the mystical is associated with a distinct type of experience or with a stage in prayer or in life, then

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[181] Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, 157.

[182] The vision that Natalie relates is as follows:

> The time when all of us are together, and the waters of the rivers are full, and the sun has warmed the cold part of the world, and it has given the really hot part a break, and all the people are sitting in a huge circle, and they are brothers and sisters, *everyone!* That's when all the spirits will dance and dance, and the stars will dance, and the sun and the moon will dance, and the birds will swoop down and they'll dance, and all the people, everywhere, will stand up and dance, and then they'll sit down again in a big circle, so huge you can't see where it goes...When the day comes that we're all holding hands in the big circle - no, not just us Hopis, everyone - then that's what the word "good" means... (Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, 155)

[183] If it is conceded that in some ways children can enter into a transforming relationship with God, I hypothesise that this is also possible for other groups of people, such as those with mental handicaps, who have been excluded by our definitions. How these relationships may bediscerned and described lies outside the scope of this thematic mapping of some different understandings of the mystical. However, a beginning in their exploration might be made through the works life and works of Jean Vanier who claims that people with handicaps 'offer a vision of the whole mystery of the Trinity: not doing things but being in communion with'. (Jean Vanier quoted by Kathryn Spink, 1990, *Jean Vanier & L'Arche*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 191.)

the output of the system can be described in terms of altered states of consciousness. However, it has been seen that some experiences that are claimed to be mystical are or become pathological. In addition, people who do not experience these altered states have been recognised as mystics. Finally, others who are excluded by definition have been found capable of experiencing the mystical. Therefore, although altered states in the form of distinct experiences or patterns of prayer or life may be found associated with union, union is not wholly comprised by these states. Thus, it is necessary to look more widely at the 'landscape of the soul' where such experiences or states can be placed within the network of relationships with God, other people and the environment.

If, as this last observation suggests, our understanding of mysticism needs to be seen against the backdrop of our network of relationships, then this points towards the whole context of our lives. Therefore, before moving from this phase of theoretical reflection in the pastoral cycle to the examination of the model in practical situations, I would like to consider briefly the 'landscape of the soul' and our everyday life.

3.6 Mapping the Landscape in Everyday Life

In Chapter 2, when I elaborated the landscape model as a general representation of Christian life, I suggested that it offered an alternative to the pilgrim model by emphasising the present moment rather than a destination or goal. In the following section, I will explore this claim further with respect to the theme of mysticism in the 'landscape of the soul'. However, the focus upon everyday life introduces a problem between the complexity inherent in the model and the simplicity of a life centred on God. I will examine this paradox before looking at how the model will be tested in the practical situation.

3.6.1 The Mystical in Everyday Life

When the Jewish thinker Martin Buber was a young man, he actively sought the ecstatic experiences associated with the mystical. One day, a troubled man came to see Buber. However, Buber was still reflecting on the experiences that he had had

that morning and so he was not open to the needs of the other person. It is reported that the young man committed suicide. This shook Buber and consequently he rejected the quest for 'mystical' states:

> Since then I have given up the religious which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy; or it has given me up. I possess nothing but the everyday out of which I am never taken. The mystery...has made its dwelling here where everything happens as it happens.[184]

By thematically mapping the different conceptions related to the mystical, it has become clear that altered states of consciousness are secondary to the encounter with God. Buber observes that 'the mystery...has made its dwelling here'. Insofar as the model focuses attention upon the dynamics of the transforming encounter with God, it may be postulated that the strength of the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is that it focuses attention on the present reality whereas Buber says 'the mystery...has made its dwelling'. God is encountered *in situ* in the present moment. Therefore, it could be said that the model of the 'landscape of the soul' depicts a mysticism found in everyday life.

The idea of an everyday mysticism is not new.[185] As the geology of experiencing was explored, it was seen that there was a refinement and narrowing of what was considered mystical until it was linked with a particular type of altered state of consciousness. From the analysis of the reports of religious experience sent to the Religious Experience Research Centre, Alister Hardy found that the distinction between mystical and numinous experiences cannot be maintained.[186] He observed that the feeling for a transcendent reality is the common and dominant element found in both these types of experiences and that, as Otto had suggested, the numinous and the mystical are complementary and interrelated – 'two essentially united poles of a single fundamental mental attitude...'[187] Furthermore, the distinction between the sacred and the profane also collapses because the encounter with a transcendent reality occurs in the matrix of everyday life.

In mapping those understandings of the mystical that are related to growth

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[184] Martin Buber, 1968, *Between God and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, New York: Macmillan, 14.
[185] Diogenes Allen, 1997, *Spiritual Theology*, 149-150.
[186] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 132.
[187] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 202; Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 132.

and development in the 'landscape of the soul', the analogy was drawn between landforms and prayer, and regions and spiritual life. As with the association of the mystical with particular experiences, the types of landforms or the regions that are considered mystical have become limited and specialised. Nevertheless, when landscape change was examined, exceptions to these schemes were found that suggested that other patterns were possible and could be discerned. Similarly, in the reports sent to the Religious Experience Research Centre, Hardy discovered that there are no 'normal' patterns in spiritual development.[188] Similarly, Ruth Burrows observes that spiritual growth is unique for each person.[189] Moreover, she stresses the 'importance of listening to God hour by hour'.[190] What begins to emerge is the intimation of the encounter with the mystery of God in the activities of daily life.[191] Such a mysticism is independent but not necessarily exclusive of more narrowly defined altered states such as 'pure' consciousness or stages in growth. At the centre of this wider understanding of the mystical is the encounter with a transcendent reality, which many people called God.[192]

The suggestion of an everyday mysticism can be found in the works of both Karl Rahner and Thomas Merton. Although Merton believes that in a strict technical sense mysticism is for an elite, nevertheless he concedes that the mystical life is open to all Christians.[193] In the thematic mapping of the different understandings of mysticism, I proposed that the function of the 'landscape of the soul' is the activity of love and that its transformative dynamic can be seen in the mutual self-giving in the exchange of love. Merton similarly contends that where there is a total giving of self to God, there will be a hidden or masked mysticism of which a person is unaware.[194] As seen earlier, this was the experience of Petra that Ruth Burrows has called 'light

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[188] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 68.
[189] Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, 137. In addition, she highlights how both distinct altered states as well as schemes for prayer can be misunderstood. (Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, 3-4; 43-55.)
[190] Ibid., 65.
[191] See Mary Reuter, 1984, A Second Look: Mysticism in Everyday Life, *Studies in Formative Spirituality*, 5(1): 84; Richard Byrne, 1987, Mystical Experience and the Frontier of the Everyday World, *Journal of Religion and Psychical Research* 10: 128-129.
[192] Alister Hardy, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 131-132.
[193] Harvey D Egan, 1982, *What are They Saying About Mysticism?*, New York: Paulist Press, 58-59.
[194] Harvey D Egan, 1984, *Christian Mysticism*, New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 237.

off' mysticism. In addition, I suggested that the transformational love at the heart of the landscape overflowed into all the networks of relationships. This reflects Merton's view that a masked mysticism is found in the everyday life of service.[195]

Rahner was influenced by the Ignatian spiritual ideal that God is to be found in all things. Therefore, he begins with the premise that God communicates. For Karl Rahner, a person is a person through reference to such a transcendent reality that is a Mystery:

> In every human being...there is something like an anonymous, unthematic, perhaps repressed, basic experience of being orientated to God, which is constitutive of man in his concrete make-up (of nature and grace), which can be repressed but not destroyed, which is 'mystical' or (if you prefer a more cautious terminology) has its climax in what the older teachers called infused contemplation.[196]

Because humankind is fundamentally orientated to God, each individual is potentially open to receive and to respond to God's self-communication. For the Christian, Rahner sees this relationship occurring within the everyday life of faith.[197] When elaborating a geology of experiencing, I suggested that although humans share a certain biological background within the matrix, in the patches can be found those psychological characteristics that may predispose a person towards certain types of experiences which have been labelled mystical. According to Rahner, what distinguishes the ordinary Christian from the great mystics is a difference in psychological make-up.[198] Ruth Burrows' conception of 'light on' and 'light off' mysticism lends support to this psychological interpretation.[199] However, both Burrows and Rahner stress that Jesus Christ is the focal point of any form of mysticism.[200] Therefore, it is necessary that we look beyond experiences themselves, and I have suggested that in the landscape model, this involves looking at the change, particularly the manifestation of fruits of the Spirit. For Rahner, the mysticism of

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[195] Harvey D Egan, 1984, *Christian Mysticism*, 234-236.
[196] Karl Rahner quoted by Harvey Egan, 1980, "The Devout Christian of the Future Will...be a 'Mystic'" Mysticism and Karl Rahner's Theology, in *Theology and Discovery: Essay in Honor of Karl Rahner*, ed. William J Kelly, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 149.
[197] Ibid., 142.
[198] Karl Rahner quoted by Harvey Egan, 1980, "The Devout Christian of the Future Will...be a 'Mystic'", in *Theology and Discovery*, 151.
[199] Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*, 43-55.
[200] Ibid., 47; Harvey D Egan, 1982, *What are They Saying About Mysticism?*, 105-106.

daily life is found in service of the other:

> It must be realized that in earthly man this emptying of self will not be accomplished by practising pure inwardness, but by real activity which is called humility, service, love of our neighbor, the cross and death. One must descend into hell together with Christ; lose one's soul, not directly to the God who is above all names but in the service of one's brethren.[201]

Rahner visualises people as 'mystic(s)-in-the-world'.[202] Thus, if this is true and if the landscape that has been hypothesised is a mystical landscape, then it is possible to conjecture that spiritual life implies a mystical life.

We act in the world. If we conceive people as agents and if in the transformation of love we act so that our actions become one with God's action, then the mystical cannot be said to be confined solely to subjective states of mind. Rather, it is a mystery that comes to meet us and act with us in the daily events of life. This last point leads to a consideration of the possible shape of our actions and whether the model of landscape is an apt metaphor.

3.6.2 The Union of One Action: The Paradox of Complexity and Simplicity

In this thesis, landscape has been approached from the perspective of thinking in systems, of which one characteristic is hierarchy. At each level in a hierarchy, there is an increase in complexity. Moreover, with each level a new reality emerges that cannot be totally described in the language of the preceding level. In the case of landscape, structure, the matrix, patches and corridors are emergent properties. In metaphorically extending the different understandings that can be associated with the mystical, I linked altered states with geology, stages of growth with geomorphology, and the encounter with God with ecology. Like their physical counterparts, each of these elements in the 'landscape of the soul' interacts with others. Thus, geology is a component of geomorphology and both geology and geomorphology predispose a landscape towards a particular ecology. Through the interactions of the elements or subsystems, a distinctive landscape develops.

I suggested that Christian spirituality emerged out of the conscious

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[201] Karl Rahner quoted by Harvey D Egan, 1982, *What are They Saying About Mysticism?*, 105.
[202] Ibid., 154.

recognition of our interaction with God (Checkland's transcendental system). In effect, Christian spirituality as a system does not technically emerge except in our awareness because God is both transcendent and immanent in creation, sustaining it in being. However, our consciousness can be disrupted by an encounter with God, so that there is a new or renewed awareness of our relationship. However, in saying this, the question is raised as to whether or not an increase in complexity occurs in our consciousness. Alternatively, it might be postulated that it is our lives that become more complex.

According to a narrow understanding of the mystical as an altered state of consciousness, human consciousness loses the complexity found in subject-object relationships and thus becomes 'pure' consciousness. Similarly, in the understanding of the mystical as a stage in prayer, through the purification process a person is stripped of all that is extraneous to God. How then can hierarchical complexity be reconciled with the paradox of simplicity?

In physical landscapes, when ecosystems are simplified by human interventions such as in farming, these landscapes can become unstable. With slight changes, havoc can be wreaked and the landscape can degrade such as in severe erosion.[203] Within the geomorphology of growing, I identified the activity of purification where a person is stripped of all that is not God. If an analogy with simplification in a landscape is made, then we would expect instability and collapse as a result of the purification process. The purification process does lead to the collapse ofthe self-system as the focal point in life:

> You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4.22-24).

John of the Cross advocated a radical renunciation of everything until nothing remained but God.[204] Kenneth Wapnick, in his study of mysticism and schizophrenia, suggests that without preparation and training a psychological collapse can occur

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[203] Richard T Forman and Michel Godron, 1986, *Landscape Ecology*, 265; Daniel B Botkin, 1990, *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty-first Century*, 153-157.
[204] John of the Cross, 1991, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 1.13.6-13.

when a person is 'thrown' into an 'inner world'.[205] Therefore, purification can be seen as a dual process of simplification and preparation. Moreover, in the degree that a person is emptied of self, so he or she can be potentially filled with the love of God.[206] However, we are still faced with a conundrum that the radical purification and simplification of the process of spiritual growth is apposite to the landscape analogy of emerging complexity.

A resolution to this impasse may be found through the work of John Macmurray. If God and humankind are perceived as agents and the transforming activity in the 'landscape of the soul' as love, then when human acts of love coinhere with God's one act of love, a sense of harmony is created. The disharmonies of the fractured and therefore multi-parted self are unified. The complexity of human life is not lost but is recreated in a new wholeness (2 Cor. 5.17). Therefore, with the conformity of our wills to God's will, our actions to God's one action, a disordered 'landscape of the soul' is reordered and transformed.

Nevertheless, although language can be changed, the organised complexity of landscape contrasts with the hidden moment of encounter with God and the radical purification of life that can grow from such an encounter. The metaphor of landscape can provide a framework in which differing ideas about mysticism can be situated and viewed with respect to one another. However, it cannot illuminate the apophatic encounter with God. With this observation, we draw towards a conclusion of the exploration of the metaphor of landscape with respect to spiritual life generally and more specifically to some different understandings linked with mysticism.

3.6.3 Testing the Model: The Return to the Practical Situation

The preceding two chapters – the representational mapping of the model and the thematic mapping of different understandings associated with mysticism – have been part of the reflective phase of the pastoral cycle. Together, these chapters have probed the question 'What would happen if Christian spiritual life is looked at, not in terms of a pilgrimage **through** a landscape, but **as** the landscape itself?' However,

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[205] Kenneth Wapnick, 1980, Mysticism and Schizophrenia, in *Understanding Mysticism*, 334-335.
[206] For example see John of the Cross, 1991, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk. II 24.8.

the context of this thesis originated in spiritual direction. Therefore, within the pastoral cycle it is necessary to return to the practical situation to test the adequacy of the model.

In spiritual direction, we can use different models to tell our stories.[207] Different models will emphases certain features and relationships, and consequently provide different infrastructures for the interpretation of experience. Models can delineate aspects of reality without necessarily being definitive and thus we may make use of one model to complement another.[208] In the preceding exploration of the landscape model, I have suggested that this model might provide an alternative to the pilgrimage model by emphasising the encounter with God in the present moment and by supplying a framework in which the different understandings of mysticism (as representative of the goal of Christian life) may be situated. Ultimately, does the model provide a useful way of looking at Christian spiritual life? To address this question, I test the model through two complementary studies: the first from the perspective of an individual case study and the second from the viewpoint of spiritual directors.

In spiritual direction, the concern is with listening to the narrative of another and with this person discerning the movements of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. This raises a question about the viability of the model as a metaphor through which a person's unfolding story might be viewed. A pastiche of personal accounts could be used to create an imaginary person and then this story analysed using the model of the 'landscape of the soul'. Alternatively, a biography of a historical person could be employed. It is this latter course that will be taken in Chapter 4 where the life and works of Clare of Assisi will be examined within the framework provided by the model. Such an analysis provides an example of the application of the model to an individual's life. Moreover, it brings the model into dialogue with the Christian tradition.

However, granted that the model might be used to look at a person's story, would anyone wish to do so? In other words, could the model be potentially useful

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[207] Sallie McFague, 1982, *Metaphorical Theology*, 139-140.
[208] Janet Martin Soskice, 1985, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 148.

in spiritual direction? The adequacy of the model will be examined in Chapter 5 where I will review the results of a survey that I conducted among spiritual directors. Through this survey the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is brought back into the practical situation and considered against the backdrop of listening to the stories of others in spiritual direction.

3.7 Summary of Chapter Three: thematic Mapping of three interpretations of mysticism

In this chapter, I have continued the reflective exploration of the metaphor of landscape. Landscape can be mapped generally as in a representational map or more specifically as in a thematic map. I have examined three different understandings associated with the mystical. With each, I look at where they might be situated within a landscape, how they might interact with other landscape elements and what they might contribute to the process or activities found in the landscape. Through this thematic mapping, I have addressed the problem that can arise with the pilgrimage model where the goal of union with God can become confused with altered states of consciousness.

Various understandings of what is meant by mysticism and its cognates can be found in popular literature. Sometimes these conceptions are a syncretistic mixture of ideas drawn from debates having different aims and purposes. I have used three texts as an entry point into a thematic mapping of some understandings of the mystical. In *The Way of the Mystic*, Betty Bethards and Jaclyn Catalfo combine several characteristics used to define the nature of a mystical consciousness in contemporary philosophical debates. Therefore, I associated *The Way of the Mystic* with ideas that link the mystical with altered states of consciousness. Although Christopher Clark, in *Reality through the Looking-Glass*, also equates the mystical with an altered state of consciousness, he places this state within the context of an ongoing process or journey. Hence, I have used this text as indicative of those conceptions that connect the mystical with stages in prayer or spiritual development. Finally, I used *The Mystical Chorus* as an example of an inversion. Donald Broadribb sees the mystical as a particular type of experience. Moreover, he contends that the mystical is antithetical to the religious community. Therefore, I

used *The Mystical Chorus* to suggest the opposite understanding where the mystical is seen as an encounter with God that takes place within a community with its scriptures, liturgy and traditions.

In the model of the 'landscape of the soul', I link the understanding of mysticism as an altered state of consciousness with a geology of experiencing. De Certeau highlights the development of a scientific mysticism where subjective states can be studied in isolation from their context. In these circumstances, it becomes possible to investigate the mystical in terms of the processes involved with human experiencing whether at the chemical level of neuro-physiology or psychological level involved with the nature of consciousness. There is a lack of consensus among researchers across various disciplines about the mechanisms involved in or the nature of mystical experiences. Hence, although an underlying geology related to the processes involved in experiencing may be conceded, such a geology cannot be definitively mapped in the 'landscape of the soul'.

In developing the model, geomorphology was connected to the understanding of the mystical as states in prayer or stages in psycho-spiritual development. I related the development of landforms to growth in prayer and regions to spiritual development. Prayer has become systematised according to different patterns. However, the stages are named and delineated, they culminate in union with God. Where union is understood as an altered state, it becomes possible to metaphorically associate it with one kind of landform. Consequently, if such schemes of prayer are rigidly followed, spiritual directors may overlook other patterns of union. Similarly, spiritual life has also been schematised under the influence of twentieth-century developmental psychology. As in the stages of prayer, the mystical is seen as a specialised landscape. However, in this case there may be little or no connection with God.

The third understanding of the mystical as the encounter with the mystery of God through Jesus Christ was likened to an ecology of relating. Here, using Lonergan's idea of God as background music, God's love was compared to background radiation. If an individual responds to this love, the encounter leads to a personal, that is, an inclusive 'I and You', relationship with God. How this relationship is articulated will vary according to the structure of the landscape in its

matrix, that is, the particular background of the person, and its patches, mediating individual characteristics. It can be argued that God communicates through the corridors of landscape and that these provide a space in which union can occur. However, the moment (or experience) of union is beyond comprehension and is not addressed in this thesis.

Having illustrated three different understandings of mysticism – as an altered state, a stage of prayer or spiritual development and an encounter with God – I proceeded to map them with reference to the 'landscape of the soul'. First, it was observed that the relationships between the different networks of subsystems in the landscape do not remain constant and unchanging. At different times and in different places what is considered mystical can vary. Then the different understandings related to mysticism were mapped with reference to the structure, function and change in a landscape.

The structure of a landscape is related to three emergent properties: matrix, patches and corridors. When the mystical is defined as an altered state, it can be examined in the matrix as an underlying neuro-physiological pattern that is potentially common and possible for all humankind. However, researches at this level have demonstrated that other factors are influential in shaping mystical consciousness. In patches, the geology of experiencing presents that which is unique to the individual. Corridors facilitate an ecology of relating. Through such corridors as scripture or the liturgy, God communicates and a person responds. In addition, corridors link a person to a wider community.

In connection with the function of a 'landscape of the soul', each of the three themes were named and their activities identified. The geology of experiencing named a system related to the disruption of consciousness followed by a state variously defined as union. I called this a system of apprehension in which, for the Christian, God is encountered. A geomorphology of growing named a system in which changes in prayer or psycho-spiritual growth are systematically recorded over a period of time. This system is characterised by a set of two activities or subsystems – apprehending and purifying. Like the geology of experiencing, the ultimate stage is identified by an altered state of consciousness called 'union'. Apprehension is one of the subsystems of the geomorphology of growing, and hence growing can be said to

presuppose the system of experiencing. Purification refers to the process of self-transcendence whereby false motives, interests and conceptions are surrendered. The ecology of relating system is named a system of encounter with God. Its activities of apprehension, growing and loving lead to a union of love with God that is practically manifested through the fruits of the Spirit. Through the activity of love a person's actions may be brought into conformity with God's one action.

The three systems of apprehending, growing and loving were related to the overall function of the 'landscape of the soul' as this was encapsulated in the activity of the transformation of a person through God's love. Keeping in mind the original associations with the mystical as well as the transformational activity of the landscape, it was proposed that in the geology of experiencing the altered state that closest approximated this activity is what Lonergan called being-in-love. Similarly, it was suggested that the geomorphology of growing be interpreted as the deepening and sharpening of attention to the love of God that comes about through purification. Finally, the ecology of relating was described as a mutual self-giving in the exchange of love.

The final characteristic of landscape that was considered was change. It was assumed that the output of the landscape system is union with God. Union conceived as an altered state apart from a relational dimension was examined. It was seen that altered states of consciousness may be induced, misinterpreted or misused and become pathological. Therefore, of themselves, altered states provide an inadequate criterion upon which to base union with God although they may be associated with such a union. What is primary is a life lived in relationship with God amidst the wider community. Furthermore, in practical situations claims are made by mystics that mystical union can occur without extraordinary states of consciousness. When the mystical is associated with a particular stage in psycho-spiritual growth, people such as children have been excluded, but when the lives of children are examined elements that have been linked with mystical states can be found. This suggests that the movements of God in the 'landscape of the soul' cannot be limited by definitions related to altered states.

Throughout this thematic mapping of the three different understandings related to the mystical, the strength of the model has begun to emerge. Repeatedly,

the 'landscape of the soul' directs attention to everyday life. God is to be encountered *in situ* in the present moment. This leads to the idea of an everyday mysticism. If through the process of transforming love we act so that our actions become one with God's action, then the mystical can be seen to be integral to everyday life. Furthermore, when our actions coinhere with God's one action, then a sense of harmony is created. The disharmonies of our multifarious existence are recreated into a new whole.

The model of the 'landscape of the soul' can provide a framework in which it is possible to situate different understandings related to the mystical. In the following chapters, a return is made to the practical situation. Here the model will be used as a lens through which to examine the life and writings of Clare of Assisi and a survey that was conducted to assess the potential usefulness of the landscape model will be reviewed.

PART THREE: THE RETURN TO THE PRACTICAL SITUATION WITH A TESTING OF THE MODEL

4. USING THE 'LANDSCAPE OF THE SOUL' TO EXAMINE THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF CLARE OF ASSISI

In the pastoral cycle, Part Two of this thesis corresponded to the phase of reflection. Here, I explored landscape as a potential model for examining Christian spiritual life. Subsequently, I used the model to map thematically three different types of understandings that have been associated with mysticism. In the pastoral cycle, the thesis now returns to the practical situation. At this point, insights from the period of reflection are introduced into praxis. Chapters 4 and 5 form the return in the cycle that was initiated in Chapter 1 of this thesis. In Chapter 4, the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is used to examine the life and writings of Clare of Assisi. Then, in Chapter 5, the landscape model is tested through a survey of spiritual directors and therapists interested in spiritual life. The purpose of these chapters is to assess the potential usefulness of the landscape model as a way of looking at Christian spiritual life in an individual case and in spiritual direction. Insofar as these two chapters are concerned with specific conditions and personal use, they are similar to Saint-Exupéry's second set of maps where particular details such as the 'farmer, the thirty sheep, the brook...[and] the shepherdess forgotten by the geographers' are recorded.[1]

It has been my contention throughout that the 'landscape of the soul' provides a particular lens through which spiritual life can be fruitfully examined. Furthermore, I have suggested that it can be used as a framework in which some of the different interpretations of mysticism may be situated. I now want to propose that in the practical situation of spiritual direction, the model might be used as a metaphor to enable a spiritual director or the person in direction to view the life of that person. To illustrate this way of using the model, it would be necessary to analyse the story of a contemporary person in spiritual direction or to create a pastiche from various stories that have been told in direction. However, the stories of

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[1] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1940, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, 8, 9.

historical people are more accessible than contemporary stories that are still emerging. In this case, the model might be used to examine these historical biographies. With the growing interest in spiritual direction, there has been an increased interest in the lives and writings of many Christian mystics.[2] A modern reading of spiritual classics for edification or exemplars of the spiritual life can be an important factor in the spiritual formation of those who are seeking spiritual direction. Therefore, examining the life of a Christian mystic through the model of the 'landscape of the soul' provides an example of how the model might be used in a practical analysis of an individual case as well as demonstrating how a person might read the life of a mystic through the lens of the model.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the life and writings of Clare of Assisi using the model of the 'landscape of the soul'. The individuals exemplifying the mystical tradition in western Christianity are diverse. Clare of Assisi belongs to the medieval tradition of women visionaries, which include the Benedictine abbess Hildegard of Bingen, and the Beguines Hadewijch of Antwerp and Mechthild of Magdeburg.[3] Clare has been chosen to test the model because she provides an example of a person who is generally accepted as a mystic.[4] In addition, through her writings, Clare's life is open to enquiry by other researchers whereas access to the story of a person in spiritual direction is more limited because of consideration for the confidentiality of the person.

In the following, I will explore Clare's life and writings through each of the characteristics of landscape – structure, function and change. This analysis will be followed by a brief examination of whether through the model, Clare's life and

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[2] This can be seen in the series *The Classics of Western Spirituality* where writings from such diverse people as the fifth-century Denys the Areopagite, the sixteenth-century Carmelite John of the Cross and the seventeenth-century religious, Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, been reprinted and made available to the general public. (*Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 1987, trans. Colm Luibheid, New York: Paulist Press; *John of the Cross: Selected Writings*, 1987, ed. Kieran Kavanaugh, New York: Paulist Press; *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal: Letters of Spiritual Direction*, 1988, New York: Paulist Press.)

[3] For example, see Monica Furlong, 1996, *Visions of Longing*, London: Mowbray and Grace M Jantzen, 1995, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[4] For example, see Regis J Armstrong, 1985, Clare of Assisi: the Mirror Mystic, *The Cord*, July-August: 195-202. Clare has also been selected because of the familiarity of the writer with her tradition.

writings can substantiate a claim for an everyday mysticism.

4.1 The Structure of 'landscape of the soul' in the Life and Writings of Clare of Assisi

The structure of a landscape is characterised by its matrix (the general surroundings), its patches (the areas of differentiation), and its corridors (the networks of communication). The matrix is analogous to the context of Clare's life. The patches represent those characteristics and experiences that distinguish Clare from her contemporaries. The corridors represent those networks of communication, which link Clare to God and to her contemporaries.

4.1.1 Matrix – Characteristics in the Background of Clare of Assisi

In the exploratory phase of the model, I suggested that the matrix in 'landscape of the soul' is formed by the historical and geographical factors that are shared by a group of people. Depending upon the resolution of vision, general historical and socio-cultural themes and movements can be depicted as well as local events and persons.

Clare of Assisi was born into the northern Italian noble family Favarone di Offreduccio at the end of the twelfth century (1193/4) and lived to the mid-thirteenth (1253).[5] This was a time of social and economic upheaval as a new craft and merchant class began to threaten the older tradition of land tenure with its noble or monastic lords. The city emerged as the centre of learning and commerce.[6] Several religious movements developed in parallel to these changes. François Vandenbroucke has characterised the twelfth century as 'a return to the sources', that is, a return to the scriptural source of Christianity, the early Church Fathers and the

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[5] For a fuller biography of Clare see: Regis J Armstrong, 1988, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, New York: Paulist Press; Marie-France Becker, Jean-François Godet and Thaddée, 1985, *Claire d'Assise: Écrits*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf; Marco Bartoli, 1989, *Clare of Assisi*, trans., Sr Frances Teresa, London: Darton, Longman and Todd; and Thomas of Celano, *The Life of Saint Clare*, trans., Paschal Robinson, London: T Fisher Unwin.

[6] Lester K Little, 1978, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe*, London: Paul Elek, xi.

ideals of early monasticism.[7] Concomitant with the return to the roots of Christianity was the emulation of the poverty of Christ and his disciples. This return to Gospel poverty provided a stimulus in the development of lay movements of wandering preachers seeking to imitate what was perceived as the apostolic life of the early Christians.[8] Frequently these movements arose in opposition to the growing merchant wealth as well as that of the monasteries and the corruption of the clergy and led to a rejection of the Church hierarchy and sacramental life as in the Humiliati and the Cathari.[9] It was at this time of spiritual unrest that Francis of Assisi, the son of the cloth merchant, Pietro Bernadone, was born in 1181/82.[10] As it will be seen, the conversion and life of Francis were pivotal in the matrix of Clare's life.

As a young man, Francis had dreams of becoming a knight. However, he was captured in a skirmish between the cities of Assisi and Perugia. After his release and long illness, he donned the habit of a penitent and made a pilgrimage to Rome. Upon his return he cared for lepers and rebuilt local churches until in 1208/09, he heard the Gospel reading in which Christ exhorts his followers to go out and preach taking nothing with them (Matt. 10.7 ff.). Francis recognised his vocation in these words and began to personify them in his life. Some other men began to join him in a life of radical poverty involving prayer, manual work and preaching. In its externals, there was little to differentiate Francis and his band of followers from other such groups of lay persons seeking a life of evangelical poverty. However, Francis emphasised charity and obedience to the Church even when the clergy were corrupt. In this way, the movement that he initiated answered the longing for a return to Gospel poverty that permeated the wider religious consciousness and yet remained within the structure of the church.

Clare responded to the model of Gospel life demonstrated in the poverty of

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[7] François Vandenbroucke, 1968, New Milieux, New Problems: From the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century, in *A History of Christian Spirituality*, Vol. 2, *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, Jean Leclercq, François Vandenbroucke, and Louis Bouyer, Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 283.
[8] Ibid., 283-284.
[9] Ibid., 264.
[10] For further biographical details see: *Francis and Clare. The Complete Works*, trans and introduction by Regis J Armstrong and Ignatius C Brady, London: SPCK; Lazaro Iriarte, 1982, *Franciscan History*, Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press.

Francis. In his *Life of Saint Clare the Virgin* (1255), Thomas of Celano portrays the young Clare as a 'heroine of penitence and sacrifice'.[11] If the wider matrix of Clare's life is considered then as a noble, she would have been influenced by two frames of reference: courtly culture and religion. Marco Bartoli observes that, contrary to Celano's description, 'Clare was not a nun in miniature: she was simply a young girl who had been brought up according to the principles of an aristocratic education'.[12] In Italian aristocratic households of that time, women would have lived secluded lives in their own quarters. Although according to courtly love women were exalted, concomitant with such exaltation it was incumbent upon women to practise such virtues as silence, humility, prudence and reserve.[13] The Lady Bona di Guelfuccio, a childhood friend, testified that:

> At the time of [Clare's] entry into religious life, she was a discreet young girl of about eighteen who always stayed in the house, and that she kept herself hidden, not wanting to be seen, and she so lived that she was not seen by those who passed by the house. Also she was very kind and was careful about the other good works.[14]

The seclusion of noble women ensured a good public repute that was an essential asset for making an advantageous marriage. Therefore, although several of the witnesses in the canonisation process of Clare considered her good reputation in the city as valuable evidence of her sanctity, her discretion may simply indicate her conformity to the conventions of her time.

Another pervasive element in the matrix of Clare's life is the practice of religion attendant with her position as a noble. Whether through works of charity, life within a cloister or as a hermit, religious life offered medieval women a degree of self-determination independent from the rule of husbands, fathers or other male relatives. Clare's mother, Ortolana, provides an example of the religious freedom that was available to noble women within marriage. She made pilgrimages to Rome, to St James at Compostella, to St Michael at Monte Gargano and to the Holy Land.[15] In addition, she performed those works of charity, which were both open to and

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[11] Marco Bartoli, 1993, *Clare of Assisi*, 34.
[12] Marco Bartoli, 1993, *Clare of Assisi*, 35.
[13] Ibid., 19.
[14] Ibid., 27.
[15] Ibid., 15.

expected of the aristocracy such as giving alms to the poor. It is reported that as a young girl, Clare would send food to the poor and in this manner, followed the model of good works set by the example of her mother.[16]

Linked with religion in the general matrix to which Clare would have been exposed are several other influences, some of which are related closely to women. For example, although present in earlier periods of Christian history, it was during this time that devotion to the humanity of Christ became more prominent.[17] Devotion to the Eucharist accompanied this devotion to the physicality of the life and death of Christ. Caroline Walker Bynum has observed the close association between medieval women and Eucharist devotion arising from the identification of women with the physical. Thus, for some women, 'physicality was not so much rooted out or suppressed as embraced and redeemed *at that point* where it intersected with the divine', that is, in the adoration or less frequently, the actual reception of the sacramental elements.[18]

Within the medieval worldview, it was thought that the universe was composed from the elements of earth, air, fire and water.[19] Of these elements, the nature of women was linked to earth and water: earth coupled women with the physical world and water with the spiritual world of visions and dreams.[20] Because it was thought that women were inherently connected with world of visions and dreams, it was therefore feasible that God could confer upon them a prophetic role as visionaries.[21] Whereas men could attain power through ecclesiastical or secular position, women were granted a divine authority to speak or lead through their visions. Although men also experienced visions, it has been observed these were

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[16] Process of Canonization, 1.1-3; 17.1, 2, 4; 20.3, in *Clare of Assisi*.
[17] François Vandenbroucke, 1968, New Milieux, New Problems: From the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century, in *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, 243-250.
[18] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, New York: Zone Books, 142.
[19] Benedicta Ward, 1990, Saints and Sybils: Hildegard of Bingen to Teresa of Avila, in *After Eve*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice, London: Collins Marshall Pickering, 108-109.
[20] Ibid., 109.
[21] Ibid., 109; Hildegard of Bingen claims God as the authority and source for her visions. (Sabina Flanagan, 1989, *Hildegard of Bingen: A Visionary Life*, London: Routledge, 54.)

characteristically different.[22] Thus, in the matrix of Clare's time, visions authenticated the experience of God.

The devotion to the humanity of Christ, for example in the Eucharist and in visions, was part of the wider matrix of Clare's life. Both Eucharistic devotion and visions are evident as will be seen when we examine the distinctive areas of Clare's life more closely. However, attention to the matrix shows that Clare is not exceptional, but a part of her world. Thus, examining her life through the matrix helps to rule out interpretations of her early life as precocious.[23]

4.1.2 Patches – Visions in the Life of Clare of Assisi

In the model of the landscape of the soul, it was suggested that the distinctive areas or patches are analogous to the personal strands in one's story. What is known of Clare is depicted through her writings, the Process of Canonisation, contemporary witnesses, juridical and hagiographical sources.[24] The writings of Clare that have survived are not systematic. Of her writings, only five have been fully authenticated - her Rule and the four letters to Agnes of Prague. Unlike Teresa of Avila, Clare did not write a biography or a number of treatises on the spiritual life. Most of our sources for Clare's life are drawn from secondary witnesses.

In the model of the 'landscape of the soul', geology was associated with the processes related to experiencing. Where mysticism is interpreted as a particular altered state of consciousness it can be viewed from a geology of experiencing. In the structure of a landscape, an underlying geology of experiencing with distinctive

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[22] Bynum draws attention to the fact that:

> Women's visions were expected and sought for; men's occurred suddenly. Women's visions confirmed them in an already chosen way of life; men's marked the onset of a new life. (Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, n. 15. 359.)

For example, the vision of Christ speaking to Francis from the crucifix in San Damiano occurred suddenly at the beginning of his religious conversion whereas Clare's visions are associated with her on-going life in the monastery of San Damiano.

[23] Thomas of Celano, The Legend of Saint Clare, Pt 1 2,3, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans., Regis J Armstrong, 1988, New York: Paulist Press, 191-192.

[24] Marco Bartoli, 1993, *Clare of Assisi*, 11. For a list of the sources for Clare of Assisi, see Appendix A.

characteristics can be manifested through the presence of certain patches. In the Process of Canonisation, evidence was presented that linked Clare of Assisi with several visionary experiences and at least one experience that partially fulfils the modern rubric of mysticism defined as pure consciousness.

Although by the late Middle ages visions had become suspect and were marginalised in spiritual life, during the time in which Clare lived, visions were an acceptable pattern of women's spirituality and conferred a degree of authority on those who experienced them.[25] If the Process of Canonisation is examined what becomes evident is that more visions recorded have Clare as the object rather than the subject. For example, a young boy is associated with Clare in several of the visions. Sister Francesca reported that when:

> The sisters believed the blessed mother was at the moment of death and the priest had given her the Holy Communion of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, she, the witness, saw a very great splendor about the head of mother, Saint Clare. It seemed to her the Lord's Body was a very small and beautiful young boy. After the holy Mother had received with great devotion and tears, as was her custom, she said in these words: 'God has given me such a gift today, that heaven and earth could not equal it.'[26]

We are not told whether Clare shared this sister's vision. Nevertheless, her response indicates a powerful experience, perhaps synonymous with union with Christ.[27] The visionary experience that is reported brings to the fore the theme of the physical Christ. Seeing Christ as a child, young boy or as the priest are examples of Eucharistic miracles recorded in medieval women's visions.[28] Similarly, a young boy is reported to have appeared to Clare during the preaching of a sermon. Once again, in parallel to the Eucharist, the 'Word made flesh' becomes concrete through preaching. In addition to the association of Christ with Clare through the vision of a child or young boy, visions of Clare with the company of the holy virgins as well as surrounded by brilliant light are also reported in the canonisation process to substantiate her holiness.

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[25] Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, 157-184.
[26] Process of Canonization, 9.10 in *Clare of Assisi.*
[27] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century, in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 119ff.
[28] Ibid., 128-129.

Clare's visions fall into two main categories – those that are practical in that they meet a particular need and those that relate to the life of faith. Of the former, Clare is reported to have seen Sister Andrea de Ferrara choking and consequently Clare sent another sister to help.[29] An example of a vision that relates to the life of faith is Clare's vision of the Christmas Matins of the brothers and seeing the Crib in the church of Saint Francis.[30] As well as conferring authority and confirming holiness, visions and dreams could be shared and used to instruct. E Pásztor observes that there is a need to study:

> The ways and forms in which women, whether abbesses or simple nuns, gave themselves to work for each others' salvation, by preaching, instructions, through explaining their own mystical experiences and even their dreams.[31]

Visions that build up faith are particularly suitable for instruction. For example, visions are the basis of *Scivias*, Hildegard of Bingen's treatise concerned with creation and redemption.[32] Although Clare is recorded to have had a vision of the 'King of Glory' shortly before her death, there are only suggestions in the Process of Canonisation that she had similar types of instructive visions that she used to teach her sisters.[33] However, one striking vision, not of God or Christ, but of Francis, is recalled by several of the witnesses.[34] Francis and the ideal of poverty as the imitation of Christ were influential in shaping the distinctiveness of Clare's 'landscape of the soul'. These themes are collapsed into each other in a vision of Francis.[35] In this instance, Clare uses the image as a mutually reflective mirror, that is, a mirror in which the Creator is glimpsed through another person or some aspect of creation.[36]

Although recorded by one or more witnesses in the Process of Canonisation,

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[29] Process of Canonization, 3.16 in *Clare of Assisi.*
[30] Process of Canonization, 3.30; 4.16; 7.9, in *Clare of Assisi.*
[31] E Pásztor quoted in Marco Bartoli, 1993, *Clare of Assisi*, n. 31, 228.
[32] Sabina Flanagan, 1989, *Hildegard of Bingen*, 55-76.
[33] Process of Canonization, 4.19, in *Clare of Assisi.*
[34] Process of Canonization, 3.29; 4.16; 6.13; 7.10, in *Clare of Assisi.*
[35] Process of Canonization, 3: 29, in *Clare of Assisi.*
[36] The mirror was a central image in the matrix of Clare's time. According to Herbert Grabes, it influenced perception, thought, knowledge and expression. (Herbert Grabes, 1982, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-imagery in the Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 4, 121.)

these reports of visions come from secondary sources and we know very little first-hand about Clare's personal experiences. During the Process of Canonisation, Sister Filippa described an experience that occurred as Clare meditated on the Passion of Christ.[37] In this experience, Clare is reported as being 'totally insensible'. She is unaware of the passage of time or of her surrounding environment. This vision meets two of the criteria for mysticism – timelessness and spacelessness – set by Smart in the twentieth-century philosophical debate about the nature of mystical experiences. Although this experience appears to have been triggered by a concentrative type of meditation on Christ's passion, possibly using a crucifix because it was Maundy Thursday, there is no indication that the vision became perceptionless, that is, one of pure consciousness. However, this experience appears to be qualitatively different from what Clare has previously experienced and she is recorded as saying that she had desired it for a long time.

Visions have been excluded from the twentieth-century philosophical position espoused by writers such as Ninian Smart, W T Stace and Robert Forman. Thus, from their perspectives, there is little evidence to support the claim that Clare

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[37] This incident is recorded in both the Process of Canonisation and in the Life written by Celano. Celano describes the incident as follows:

> Once, the day of the most sacred Supper arrived, in which *the Lord loved His own until the end (Jn 13: 1)*. Near evening, as the agony of the Lord was approaching, Clare, sad and afflicted, shut herself up in the privacy of her cell. While in her own prayer she was accompanying the praying Savior and when *saddened even to death* she experienced the effect of His sadness, she was filled at once with the memory of His capture and of the whole mockery and she sank down on her bed. All that night and the following day, she was so absorbed that she remained out of her senses. She seemed to be joined to Christ and to be otherwise totally insensible. Always focusing the light of her eyes on one thing.
>
> A certain sister close to her often went to see if she might want something and always found her the same way. But with Friday night coming on, the devoted daughter lit a candle and, with a sign not a word, reminded her mother of the command of Saint Francis. For the saint had commanded her that no day should pass without some food. With that [sister] standing by, Clare, as if returning from another world, offered this word: 'What need is there for a candle? Isn't it daytime?' 'Mother,' she replied, 'the night has gone and a day has passed, and another night has returned!' To which Clare said: 'May that vision be blessed, most dear daughter! Because after having desired it for so long, it has been given to me. But, be careful not to tell anyone about that vision while I am still in the flesh'. (Thomas of Celano, The Legend of Saint Clare, 31, in *Francis and Clare.*)

is a mystic. However, the landscape model provides a means of probing other reasons why Clare has been counted as a Christian mystic by her contemporaries and later generations. Before turning to the function of the landscape to explore this in greater depth, I will look briefly at some of the corridors in Clare's life.

4.1.3 Corridors – the Eucharist, the Word of God, and Prayer

Corridors not only facilitate the input to a landscape system but they also provide the networks through which relationships are fostered and sustained. The underlying geology and the surface geomorphology can influence the development of corridors that in turn affect the movements and transformations that can occur in a landscape. In this way, the systems of geology, geomorphology and ecology overlap. The Eucharist has already been alluded to as an influential factor in Clare's life. Other corridors that are important are the Word of God and prayer. If the Eucharist, the Word of God and prayer are considered as corridors in Clare's life, then they fulfil a dual role of facilitating the encounter with God as well as nurturing the subsequent relationship that may grow out of this encounter.

For some medieval women, the Eucharist provided a means of union with Christ. As Caroline Bynum observes, 'simply to eat Christ is enough: it *is* to achieve union'.[38] In the Process of Canonisation, it is witnessed that Clare received communion with 'great devotion and tears' and at one time, exclaimed that 'God has given me such a gift today, that heaven and earth could not equal it'.[39] Thus, in common with some other women of her time, it can be conjectured that for Clare the Eucharist provided a means of encounter and union with Christ.

The canonical hours provided a daily rhythm of prayer within the cycle of liturgical seasons. What was unusual in the common prayer of the community is that Clare vetoed singing: the office was to be said or intoned rather than sung according to Benedictine tradition.[40] However, this regulation reveals that Clare was

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[38] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century, in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 126.
[39] Process of Canonization, 9.10, in *Clare of Assisi.*
[40] The Rule of Saint Clare, III.1, in *Francis and Clare.*

determined to follow the customs of the friars. In his letter to the whole order, Francis prescribed that the office be said so that concentration was on:

> The harmony of the mind, so that the voice may blend with the mind, and the mind be in harmony with God. [Let them do this] in such a way that they may please God through purity of heart and not charm the ears of the people with sweetness of voice.[41]

The importance of this injunction is that it places emphasis on the unity between what is vocalised and what is in the person's heart as a person stands before God. Thus, the office provided a veritable means of being in the presence of God.

That scripture and the preaching of the Word of God were essential to Clare was manifested through her rebellion against the papal bull *Quo elongati* published by Gregory IX in 1230. With the issue of the bull *Quo elongati*, the brothers would need the permission of the pope for pastoral visits to the sisters. Clare protested. She claimed that Francis had promised 'the same loving care and special solicitude for us as for his own brothers'.[42] Although enclosed, 'spiritual dialogue and preaching' were central to Clare's way of life.[43] Celano writes that:

> She provided for her children, through dedicated preachers, the nourishment of the Word of God and from this she did not take a poorer portion .... Although she was not educated in the liberal arts, she nevertheless enjoyed listening to the sermons of those who were, because she believed that a nucleus lay hidden in the text that she would subtly perceive and enjoy with relish.[44]

Clare's response to the bull was to send all the brothers away from San Damiano, even those who begged food for the community, saying 'Let him now take away from us all the brothers since he has taken away those who provide us with the food that is vital'.[45] In this way, Clare initiated what was, in effect, a hunger strike against the bull *Quo elongati*. The Word of God mediated through preaching provided a place where the mystery of God's self-revelation could be encountered. For example, although the evidence is secondary, some sisters reported visions of Clare with the child Jesus during the preaching of a sermon.[46] As Christ was physically

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[41] Francis of Assisi, A Letter to the Entire Order, 41, in *Francis and Clare.*
[42] The Testament of St Clare, 29, in *Clare of Assisi.*
[43] Mario Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, 156.
[44] Thomas of Celano, The Legend of Saint Clare, 37 in *Clare of Assisi.*
[45] Ibid., 37.
[46] Process of Canonization, 9.4; 10.8, in *Clare of Assisi.*

present in the Eucharist, so too, he was present in the preaching of the Word of God.

Although the visions associated with Clare at the preaching of the word or at the Eucharist convey something of the atmosphere connected with Clare, they are secondary reports. However, through Clare's letters her encounter and relationship with God in prayer can be glimpsed. For example in the third letter to Agnes, a response to the papal decree imposing the Cistercian form of fasting on all the monasteries following the example of the Poor Ladies of San Damiano, Clare uses the image of the mirror to express transformation in Christ:

> Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
> Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
> Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance!
> And transform your entire being into the image
> of the Godhead Itself through contemplation.
> So that you too may feel what His friends feel
> as they taste the hidden sweetness
> that God Himself has reserved from the beginning
> for those who love Him.[47] (*Letter* 3: 12-14)

In an earlier letter, Clare had urged Agnes to '...gaze upon [Him], consider [Him], contemplate [Him], as you desire to imitate [Him].' If these are considered as steps in prayer, then the line 'Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!' might be interpreted as an example of the steps of gazing, considering and contemplating. Therefore, this passage may be indicative of Clare's prayer.

In this letter, Clare uses the image of the mirror to suggest union with God. A Eucharistic link is implied in this passage when Clare speaks of tasting the 'hidden sweetness'. For some medieval women, eating, tasting and drinking were images associated with union with God in the Eucharist.[48] In addition, that which is tasted is frequently recorded as sweet.[49] Thus, in this passage there is an indication that for Clare the encounter with God through prayer was like the encounter with God in the Eucharist. Moreover, if, as Bynum observes, a person '*becomes* Christ's crucified body in *eating* Christ's crucified body' in the Eucharistic, then Clare's use of the

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[47] The Third Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 12-14, in *Francis and Clare.*
[48] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century, in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 140.
[49] Ibid., 140.

image of the mirror may also indicate union with Christ.[50]

Corridors in a landscape are areas that facilitate communication between other landscape areas and ecological groups in the landscape. In the 'landscape of the soul', corridors mediate God's address to people, thus providing places of encounter. Using the landscape model, for Clare, the Eucharist, the Word of God and prayer acted as corridors. However, through the links with the Eucharist, there are intimations from the reports of Clare's life and in her writings that these corridors acted as far more than places where God's call was encountered. Rather they provided spaces in which the soul was united with God. If this was the case, then, as far as Clare's life was concerned, Donald Broadribb's claim that 'religious organizations and meetings...[are] a hindrance or at least not essential' to the mystic cannot be sustained.[51] It is precisely within and through the ecclesiastical organisation, symbols, rituals, and practices that Clare's encounter with God is nurtured and union occurs. In this way, corridors act not only as networks of communication, but areas of transformation as well.

The link between communication and transformation introduces the subject of the function of a landscape. Thus, in this study of Clare, we are led to an examination of what is happening in her 'landscape of the soul'.

4.2 The Function of the 'Landscape of the Soul' in the Life and Writings of Clare of Assisi

In this thesis, landscape is being treated as an open system. Therefore, the landscape can be seen in terms of its input, transformational processes and its output.

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[50] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century, in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 146. From contemporary studies, the most prominent trait of women-mirror relationships is the linking of the body and the spirit. Jenijoy LaBelle refers to this as an interweaving of the 'I' which knows and the 'I' which is known. Thus, from this perspective it might be conjectured that in Clare's use of the image of the mirror there is a linking of her physicality with that of Christ. Such a speculation could possibly be substantiated by Bynum's observation that for some medieval women the imitation of Christ is literally the 'incorporation of flesh into flesh'. (Jenijoy LaBelle, 1988, *Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 22; Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century, in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 146.)

[51] Donald Broadribb, 1995, *The Mystical Chorus*, 110.

The function of the landscape describes its transformational processes. In the 'landscape of the soul', I have hypothesised that this process is the transforming of human nature through the grace of God. The output of this transformation has been named as union with God through Christ. It has been suggested that such a union is a union of love, where human will is conformed to the will of God or in other words, human actions are brought into harmony with God's one action. In Chapter 3, I examined the function of a 'landscape of the soul' in relation to the networks of subsystems previously named a geology of experiencing, a geomorphology of growing and an ecology of relating. Within the framework of the landscape model, these networks will be used to examine Clare's life and writings.

4.2.1 A Geology of Experiencing

It has been suggested that the geology of experiencing represents a system of apprehending whereby everyday consciousness is disrupted and then deconstructed (and reconstructed, depending on philosophical perspective). Numerous inputs can lead to the disruption of consensus or everyday consciousness. Two prominent inputs can be identified in Clare's life. First, there is the impact of Francis on her life and second, there is her daily encounter with God through the Eucharist, the Word of God and prayer – types of communication that I have earlier linked with corridors in landscape structure.

Clare attributed her conversion to the life and teaching of Francis of Assisi.[52] The conversion to the poor Christ and the ideal of holy poverty provided the focal point around which her subsequent life was consolidated. As we have seen, the return to the ideal of Gospel poverty would have been part of the wider matrix of Clare's background. However, the example of Francis would have been particular to her immediate surroundings. In her Testament, Clare declares that she freely chose to follow the example of Francis. Francis provided a channel through which God addressed Clare and she responded by selling her inheritance, distributing the

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[52] Clare of Assisi, The Testament of St Clare, 2-23, in *Francis and Clare.* There is still debate about the authenticity of The Testament although is it considered a useful source for the spirituality of Clare.

proceeds among the poor and then, during the night of Palm Sunday 1212, going secretly to the church of Our Lady of Angels, at the Portiuncula, where Francis received her into the religious life. After short stays at the Benedictine monastery of San Paolo delle Abbadesse and with a small group of women at San Angelo di Panzo, probably a small experimental community of penitents, Clare was finally established in San Damiano, the first church that Francis had repaired and about where he is reported to have prophesied that a group of holy women would live.[53]

The revelation of God's love is the principal input into the 'landscape of the soul'. As we have seen, corridors facilitate communication in a landscape. Using Bernard Lonergan's idea of God's love as background music, I suggested that like the trophic-dynamic transformation of the energy in the environment, the essential transformation in the 'landscape of the soul' is God's love. However, unlike a natural system, the transformation of God's love in response to God's call is contingent upon human choice. Thus, the involuntary transformation of energy in nature becomes communication between persons, in other words, the intentional exchange between a 'You and I'.[54] In Clare's life, some of these corridors of communication have been identified as the Eucharist, the Word of God and prayer.

Although the Song of Songs is a poem or series of poems in the Old Testament depicting human love, it has a long tradition of allegorical interpretation. For instance, the relationship between the bride and the bridegroom has been seen as that between Israel and God, the Christian church and God, and the soul and God.[55] E Ann Matter suggests that the Song of Songs was the 'most frequently interpreted book of medieval Christianity'.[56] The Song of Songs, along with the development of courtly love, provided images and a language of love to describe the relationship

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[53] The Testament of St Clare, 14, in *Francis and Clare.*
[54] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 61.
[55] Andrew Louth, 1981, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 55; Roland E Murphy, 1990,*The Song of Songs: A commentary on the Book of Canticles or The Song of Songs*, ed. S Dean McBride, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 12-28.
[56] E Ann Matter, 1990, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 6.

between the soul and God.[57]

In her letters, Clare describes Agnes as the spouse of Jesus Christ. She tells Agnes to be like the bride in the Song of Songs and describe Christ as the bridegroom.[58] Bridal imagery was common in medieval women's writings and thought. For example, Hildegard of Bingen had dressed her nuns as brides when they went to receive communion.[59] Clare characterised Christ as a noble spouse:

> When You have loved [Him], You shall be chaste; when You have touched [Him], You shall become pure; when you have accepted [Him], You shall be a virgin.
> Whose power is stronger,
> Whose generosity is more abundant,
> Whose appearance more beautiful,
> Whose love more tender,
> Whose courtesy more gracious.
> In Whose embrace You are already caught up;
> Who has adorned Your breast with precious stones
> And has placed priceless pearls in Your ears and has surrounded You with sparkling gems as though blossoms of springtime and placed on Your head a golden crown as a sign [to all] of Your holiness.

Agnes was the daughter of King Ottakar of Bohemia and Queen Constance of Hungary and was sought as a bride by Emperor Frederick II.[60] In this passage, Clare recounts to Agnes the ways in which the love of Christ exceeds that of an earthly prince. Similarly, as the woman in the Song of Songs is adorned with ornaments, so too will Agnes be attired as a queen by Christ (The Song of Songs 1.10-11). Thus, Clare links the nobility of Agnes with that of a soul loved by Christ.

In a later letter, Clare describes in more depth the experience of the love of Christ that comes through contemplation. Christ is the vision of 'the splendor of eternal glory':

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[57] Roland E Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, 21-28; E Ann Matter, 1990, *The Voice of My Beloved*, 123-133.
[58] For example, see The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 30-32, in *Francis and Clare*. Pierre Brunette refers to Clare's spirituality as a 'nuptial mystique' in that this theme occurs 18 times in her writings. He identifies Christ as spouse as the key symbol. (Pierre Brunette, 1989, Francis and Clare of Assisi: A Journey into Symbols of Growth, *Studia Mystica*, 12: 18.)
[59] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century, in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 134.
[60] Regis J Armstrong, and Ignatius C Brady, trans., 1982, *Francis and Clare*, 189.

> Whose beauty all the heavenly hosts admire unceasingly,
> Whose love inflames our love,
> Whose contemplation is our refreshment,
> Whose graciousness is our joy,
> Whose gentleness fills us to overflowing,
> Whose remembrance brings a gentle light,
> Whose fragrance will revive the dead,
> Whose glorious vision will be the happiness of all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.[61]

This vision is open to those who cling to Christ with their whole heart.[62] Furthermore, Clare links the contemplation that leads to this vision with the Song of Songs.[63] This suggests that for Clare the relationship between Christ and the soul is like that between lovers. Whereas in contemporary philosophical debates and some popular conceptions, what I call the geology of experiencing is linked with altered states such as pure consciousness, I have suggested that this altered state be seen as being-in-love with God. Clare's injunction to cling to Christ with one's whole heart is suggestive of the state of being-in-love. This is a tentative conjecture, but in the Process of Canonisation, Clare's sisters attest that her countenance shone after prayer and at these times Clare would only talk about God, attributes associated in popular psychology with being-in-love.[64]

Through the lens of a geology of experiencing, we see that God's call to Clare was mediated through Francis of Assisi. Clare's response was to adopt a form of religious life based on imitation of Christ's poverty. Furthermore, the pattern of call and response was continued through the Eucharist, the preaching of the Word of God and prayer. In elaborating the model of the 'landscape of the soul', I suggested that if the geology of experiencing was linked to a specific change in consciousness, this might be thought of in terms of being-in-love. In the fourth letter to Agnes with its references to the Song of Songs, Clare's account of the love of Christ may be indicative of such a state. Nevertheless, this description of contemplation comes towards the end of Clare's life and therefore may be the product of long years of

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[61] The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 10-13, in *Francis and Clare*.
[62] Ibid., 9.
[63] Ibid., 30-32.
[64] William Johnston, 1995, *Mystical Theology*, 80.

prayer.

This last point brings us to the geomorphology of growing.

4.2.2 A Geomorphology of Growing

Within the function of the landscape model, I have named the geomorphology of growing as a system of growing. The processes of apprehending and purification-illumination were identified as activities taking place as the 'landscape of the soul' develops. Similar to the geology of experiencing, the underlying process that is being mapped is the transformation of consciousness over time. In the matrix of Clare's time, various forms of mortification were practised.

Clare, like her many of her contemporaries, carried out extreme fasting and self-inflicted suffering such as wearing hair shirts.[65] However, such practices were not conceived as ends in themselves. Rather, they were a way of imitating Christ. Whereas men could imitate Christ through the relinquishing of power, women could identify with the suffering and humanity of Christ through their bodies. Caroline Walker Bynum writes that:

> In their symbols women expanded the suffering, giving self they were ascribed by their culture, becoming ever more wonderfully and horribly the body on the cross. They became that body not as a flight from but as a continuation of the self. And ... that body was also God.[66]

Renunciation, particularly of food, and mortification linked the physicality of women with the corporal nature of Christ and hence were seen as means of salvation.[67] Therefore, even illness was considered by many a blessing.[68] In a society where women lacked positions of social, economic or ecclesiastical power, fasting and mortification, which were within their control, provided the symbols and means of self-sacrifice and were held to demonstrate their total commitment to and identification with Christ. Thus, these practices were a means of growing closer to

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[65] The Process of Canonization, 1.7, 8; 2.5, 8; 3.5; 4.5, in *Clare of Assisi.*.
[66] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1987, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 295.
[67] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages, in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 184.
[68] Benedicta Ward, 1990, Saints and Sybils: Hildegard of Bingen to Teresa of Avila, in *After Eve*, 109.

God.[69]

In connection with the model of landscape, I have suggested that purification represents a process whereby false motives, interests and conceptions are surrendered as a person's life is transformed in Christ and a person's will or actions are brought into conformity with God. Whereas in some contemporary psychological debates and traditional schemes of prayer, this system is linked with altered states of consciousness associated with stages of prayer of psycho-spiritual life, I have suggested that the geomorphology of growing be seen as a deepening and honing of sensitivity to the love of God. Over time, as a person lets go of all that is extraneous to the focus on God, awareness of God's love deepens. For Clare, single-mindedness is evident in her imitation of Christ's poverty, her religious vocation and her prayer.

Little is know of the early years of Clare and her companions at San Damiano. While in harbour at Genoa in 1216, Jacques de Vitry wrote that the *Sorores Minores* 'live near the cities in various hospices. They accept nothing, but live from the work of their hands'.[70] Francis desired that his followers should be totally free from any economic bonds in order that they could associate with the poorest of the poor. This meant a life of destitution, transience and insecurity, '...as pilgrims and strangers in this world who serve the lord in poverty and humility, let them go begging for alms with full trust'.[71] It is at this point, according to Bartoli, that Clare may be contrasted with her mother. Whereas Ortolana followed the social convention of caring for the needs of the poor and undertaking works of charity, Clare broke with convention by determining to identify physically with the poor.[72] However, Bartoli's observation needs to be qualified, because in her letters and in her rule, the primary focus is upon identification with the poverty of Christ. The importance of the ideal of poverty is evident in her struggle for her own monastic rule.

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[69] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1987, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, 295.
[70] Testimony of Jacques de Vitry, in *Clare of Assisi*, 246.
[71] Francis, II Rule, 6.2, in *Francis and Clare.*
[72] Marco Bartoli, 1993, *Clare of Assisi*, 40.

In 1219, Cardinal Ugolino provided Clare and her sisters with an austere Constitution based on the Benedictine Rule that he had composed for other new groups of women. Included in Ugolino's rule was the right to communal property. Clare insisted on the radical pursuit of poverty and dependence on the Friars Minor. The privilege of poverty which Clare demanded was a significant departure from common monastic practice in that she rejected any socio-economic support for her community. The sisters were to work with their hands and to rely for the rest on the charity of others and the providence of God. Consequently, a struggle between Clare and the ecclesiastical hierarchy began, a struggle which was to last 34 years, the rest of Clare's life. When Ugolino, as Pope Gregory IX, tried to persuade Clare to accept some possessions for the benefit of the community and even suggested dispensation from the vow of poverty, she is recorded to have replied: 'Holy Father, never will I consent to be absolved from *following Christ*'.[73] Although this is an apocryphal saying, it indicates that for Clare, poverty was the means through which she single-mindedly focused on and imitated Christ. Moreover, this poverty was grounded in her monastic vocation, and therefore it is more than a simple identification with the poor as Bartoli claims. This last point brings us to the issue of vocation, that is, the form of life through which a person responds to God.

In her Testament, Clare enjoins her sisters to praise God for their vocation, which they received daily through the grace of God.[74] Caroline Bynum observes a significant connection between the individual and the community in the twelfth century. She writes that:

> If the twelfth century did not 'discover the individual' in the modern meaning of expression of unique personality and isolation of person from firm group membership, it did in some sense discover – or rediscover – the self, the inner mystery, the inner man, the inner landscape. But it also discovered the group, in two very precise senses: it discovered that many separate 'callings' or 'lives' were possible in the church, and it elaborated a language for talking about how those groups defined themselves and how individuals became part of them (the language of 'conforming to a model'). Moreover, these two aspects of the

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[73] Fidelis Hart, 1987, Following in the Foot Prints of the Poor Christ: Clare's Spirituality, in *Medieval Religious Women*, Vol. 2, eds., L Shank and J Nichols, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Pubs, 181 [italics in the original].

[74] The Testament of Saint Clare, 1-6, in *Francis and Clare.*

> twelfth century go hand in hand – inner with outer, motive with model, self with community.[75]

Clare tells her sisters that their vocation is a special calling through which they may be united to Christ and through which they may act as mirrors of Christ to the rest of the world. By following the model of Christ, they in turn become patterns of Christ for other people.[76] Thus, the transformation in Christ is both inward in their own lives and outward in the lives of others.[77] It is for this reason that Clare encourages Agnes to hold fast to the perfection of life that she, Agnes, has professed, regardless of who commands her to do otherwise, because this life follows the model set by Christ.[78] Thus, for Clare, attentiveness to God comes through both prayer as well her monastic vocation. That is, as Bynum observes, there is a balance between 'inner with outer, motive with model, self with community'.[79]

In the geomorphology of growing, prayer is another way through which Clare becomes more and more attentive to God in Christ. This can be implied from her letters, where Clare encourages Agnes to continually look upon Christ. For example, in her second letter she tells Agnes to gaze upon [Him], consider [Him], contemplate [Him], as you desire to imitate [Him].[80] She advises that Agnes study Christ as she would study her own face in a mirror because Christ is that 'the mirror without blemish':[81]

> In as much as this vision is the splendor of eternal glory, the brilliance of eternal light and the mirror without blemish, look upon that mirror each day, O queen and spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually study your face within it, so that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes and cover yourself with the flowers and garments of all the virtues, as becomes the daughter and most chaste bride of the Most High King. Indeed, blessed poverty, holy humility, and inexpressible charity are reflected in that mirror, as, with the grace of God, you can contemplate them throughout the entire mirror.[82]

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[75] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1982, Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 106-107.
[76] The Testament of Saint Clare, 6, in *Francis and Clare*.
[77] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1982, Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?, in *Jesus as Mother*, 95-102.
[78] The Second Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague 10-18, in *Francis and Clare*.
[79] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1982, Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?, in *Jesus as Mother*, 106-107.
[80] The Second Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 20, in *Francis and Clare*.
[81] The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 10-13, in *Francis and Clare*.
[82] Ibid., 14.

In this passage, Clare makes an exemplary use of the image of the mirror.[83] The mirror is Christ and that which is reflected is Christ's poverty, humility and love. Moreover, for Clare espousal to Christ in the religious life and contemplation of the vision of Christ are an invitation to share in the 'sacred banquet' which is Christ.[84] Such a link introduces a Eucharistic motif to contemplation. If the Eucharist is a place where the soul may be united to Christ, then this suggests that the prayer Clare is describing is likewise a place where union may occur.

What emerges through a geomorphology of growing in Clare's 'landscape of the soul' is that both renunciation and poverty within her monastic vocation meant one thing for Clare. In her second letter to Agnes, Clare declares that one thing is necessary and that is to 'embrace the poor Christ'.[85] For Clare, growth in the life of the Spirit means that the 'mind be in harmony with God'.[86] Therefore, Clare enjoins Agnes to look upon and to follow Christ in his poverty and in his sufferings.[87] Thus, for Clare, growing in the Spirit leads to a single-minded focus on Christ.[88] Furthermore, through God's grace and love the human soul can become the dwelling place of God.[89]

This point brings us to the last dimension that I explored in the reflection on the model of the 'landscape of the soul' and that is, the ecology of relating.

4.2.3 An Ecology of Relating

Within the function of the landscape model, I have named the ecology of relating as a system demarcating a relationship that is characterised by the activities of apprehending, growing and loving. This system represents a movement of love at the heart of which God's love is freely given and freely returned. Thus, the ecology

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[83]Herbert Grabes, 1982, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-imagery in Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*, 121.
[84] The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 8-9, in *Francis and Clare.*
[85] The Second Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 17, in *Francis and Clare.*
[86] Francis of Assisi, A Letter to the Entire Order, 41, in *Francis and Clare.*
[87] The Second Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 20, in *Francis and Clare.*
[88] Ibid., 14.
[89] The Third Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 22, in *Francis and Clare.*

of relating was seen as a mutual self-giving in the exchange of love. In Clare's life a relationship of love can be seen with respect to God, to Francis, to her sisters and within the wider community.

The theme of God's self-giving in the life of Christ and the human response of love and praise are found in Clare's first letter to Agnes. Here, she highlights the exchange whereby God became poor so that humankind might become rich and in response she urges Agnes to rejoice:[90]

> O blessed poverty, who bestows eternal riches on those who love and embrace her!
>
> O holy poverty, to those who possess and desire you God promises the kingdom of heaven and offers, indeed, eternal glory and blessed life!
>
> God-centered poverty, whom the Lord Jesus Christ Who ruled and now rules heaven and earth, Who spoke and things were made, condescended to embrace before all else![91]

Although a life of poverty brings the promise of eternal riches and salvation, such a life of poverty should be embraced out of love for God who loved humankind to the extent of condescending to become poor.[92] Moreover, in her first letter to Agnes, Clare is clear that without poverty, a person will lose the fruit of love.[93] This experience of the love at the heart of an exchange between God and humankind is more explicitly expressed in her third letter to Agnes where she says 'love Him totally Who gave Himself totally for Your love'.[94] Similarly, in the fourth letter, Clare encourages Agnes to allow God's self-revelation of love in the passion of Christ to enflame her love.[95] In her letters, Clare describes a mutual exchange of love between Creator and creature through the image of poverty.

In exploring the dynamic of love it was suggested that the love of God did not exclude the love of others. One of the visions associated with Clare is a vision

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[90] The First Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 17-21, in *Francis and Clare.*
[91] Ibid., 15-17.
[92] Ibid., 19-21.
[93] Ibid., 25.
[94] The Third Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 15, in *Francis and Clare.*
[95] The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 19-27, in *Francis and Clare.*

involving Francis:

> It seemed to her she brought a bowl of hot water to Saint Francis along with a towel for drying his hands. She was climbing a very high stairway, but was going very quickly, almost as though she were going on level ground. When she reached Saint Francis, the saint bared his breast and said to the Lady Clare: 'Come, take and drink.' After she had sucked from it, the saint admonished her to imbibe again. After she did so, what she had tasted was so sweet and delightful she in no way could describe it. After she had imbibed, that nipple or opening of the breast from which the milk came remained between the lips of blessed Clare. After she took what remained in her mouth in her hands, it seemed to her it was gold so clear and bright that everything was seen in it as in a mirror.[96]

What is of particular note in this vision is that Clare suckles at the breast of Francis and that it was Francis who became the mirror. It would have been a more common image to suckle at the breast of Christ and to see Christ as the mirror, as indeed Clare writes in her letters to Agnes.[97] Marco Bartoli claims:

> Clare's love for Francis, thrown into relief so well by this vision, was so much a characteristic of her love for God and of her spirituality that she brought about a true and original shift in meaning of the traditional symbols for the love of God. Clare used these symbols to indicate her love for Francis, and yet this love left her love of God no less pure.[98]

In Clare's vision, Francis provided a mutually reflective mirror. However, whereas

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[96] The Process of Canonization, 3.29, in *Clare of Assisi.*

[97] See Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg, in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 79-117.

[98] Marco Bartoli, in his book *Clare of Assisi*, presents a detailed exposition of the images which emerge in Clare's mirror vision of Francis. He identifies six scenarios of which the mirror is the last. The first scene is that of the bowl and towel. Clare's sisters record that she was very attentive to the needs of the sick. When Francis was ill, he spent one winter at San Damiano and Clare may have attended to his needs at this time. However, the bowl and towel were also reminiscent of Christ washing the feet of the disciples and symbolically indicated humility and poverty. In the second scene, Francis is at the top of a high stairway. Bartoli suggests that this indicates Clare's deference to Francis. In addition, the ladder is also a common image of the ascent to heaven and growth in holiness. Although taking spiritual nourishment at the breast of Christ is an image which is encountered in medieval literature, the third scene is rather curious because Francis suckles Clare. The action of suckling is used to indicate the dependent nature of the child upon the mother, as well as the primal unity between mother and child. In the fourth scene, Clare describes the sweetness of the what she had tasted. 'O taste and see that the Lord is good!' would have been one of many Biblical allusions to spiritual nourishment which informed the medieval imagination. The fifth scene is reminiscent a child biting a mother's breast and here, Francis' nipple remains in Clare's mouth. Finally, Clare takes the nipple into her hand and it is like a golden mirror. It is in this detail that Clare's vision is surprising. Instead of the mirror of Christ, it is the image of Francis that she contemplates. (Mario Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, 156, 141-157)

the mirror and the images such as sucking at the breast (of Christ) were frequently used to indicate mystical love and union, Clare employed them to convey a double union, that with Francis and through Francis with God.[99] In terms of the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul', this vision could be seen to demonstrate that love of God does not necessarily exclude the equal but different love of others.

However, this vision of Francis is derived from a secondary source and therefore, it is necessary to look at Clare's own works. If the love between God and the individual overflows into the networks of other relationships, then this love should be manifest within a wider community. Therefore, I will examine the activity of love between Clare and her community and the environs in the following section where I look at change in the landscape.

It has been suggested that the geology of experiencing be seen as a being-in-love with God rather than in terms of altered states of consciousness. For Clare, this geology of experiencing is epitomised through the call of God through Francis and her response of embracing Christ through a monastic vocation based on radical poverty in imitation of Christ. The geomorphology of growing has been linked with an increasing attentiveness to the love of God. In the pattern of monastic life, it may be surmised that Clare's awareness of God deepened through the office, the Word of God and the Eucharist. Finally, the ecology of relating is connected with a mutual self-giving of love between God and a person, demonstrated by Clare through her life and letters.

The importance of love may be discerned by looking at the output in the landscape system in the following section.

4.3 Change in the 'Landscape of the Soul' in the Life and Writings of Clare of Assisi

As a system, landscape can be examined in relation to its inputs, transformational activities and its output. In the model of the 'landscape of the soul',

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[99] Mario Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, 156.

I have suggested that the output is a union of love with God in Christ. Union with God can be examined in relation to the wider community as well as to the individual's life.

The love that was manifested in Clare's life can be seen through the secondary reports of the sisters who lived with her and through the rule that Clare composed. At the Process of Canonization, when the sisters were asked about the manner of Clare's life, some sisters equated her holiness with conventional markers such as fasting, mortification and illness. For example, Lady Francesca replied:

> She said that she always saw Lady Clare acting in great holiness. Asked in what sort of holiness, she replied in great punishment of her flesh and in great harshness of her life.[100]

Although these penitential practices were seen as important in eleven of the reports, they were collectively overshadowed by the accounts of Clare's service to the sisters (14 reports), her humility (5 reports) and her happiness (2 reports). For example, it was testified that Clare was concerned for both the physical and spiritual welfare of the sisters. While she was able, Clare cared for and healed the sick, washed the feet of the extern or serving sisters, served in the refectory, covered sleeping sisters and would exchange garments with any sister whose clothing was poorer than her own.[101] Clare was also solicitous about the spiritual needs of her sisters and as well as instructing them daily, she would speak privately to those who were troubled and tempted.[102] In her injunction to the extern sisters to praise God for 'beautiful trees, flowers and bushes' as well as 'for and in all things when they saw all peoples and creatures', the reported joy and happiness of Clare appears to extend to a harmony with creation.[103] What these reports would seem to indicate is that the love between God and Clare overflowed as service, healing and concern into the wider network of relationships in the monastery as well as in the local community.

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[100] The Process of Canonization, 8.2, 3, in *Clare of Assisi.*
[101] In the Process of Canonization, see – Care of the Sick: 1.12; 2.1; 6.7; Healing of sisters: 1.16-19; 2.13, 15, 16; 3.6, 10, 11, 17; 4.7-10; 5.1; 6.8, 9, 7.7, 10.1, 12.12, 13, 14.5; Healing of others: 2.15, 18; 3.15; 4.11; 9.6; Washed the feet of Externs: 1.12; 2.3; 3.9; 10.6; Serves the sisters: 1.12; 2.3; 3.9; Covered sisters: 2.3; Exchanged clothing: 2.4; 3.4, in *Clare of Assisi.*
[102] In the Process of Canonization, see – Teaching: 1.9, 14; 2.10; 3.3; 6.2; 8.3; 11.2; Trouble sisters: 2.6; 10.5.
[103] In the Process of Canonization, see – Happiness: 3.6; 6.4; Creation: 14. 9..

However, these reports were made during the Process for Canonization, in which it would have been incumbent on the witnesses to prove the virtue of Clare's life. In addition, miracles that showed God working through Clare would have been needed to substantiate their claims. Benedicta Ward observes that in the development of the canonization process, two criteria were established for establishing the claims for sanctity. She quotes Innocent III:

> To be accepted for a saint among men in the church militant, two things are essential: holiness of life and mighty signs, that is, merits and miracles, so that each may reciprocally bear witness to the other. Separately, merits without miracles or miracles without merits are not fully sufficient to establish sainthood here on earth.[104]

The reports concerning the virtue of Clare's life were in accord with the first of these criteria. Moreover, although one might say that Clare's solicitude for others is evident in the number of healings that were attributed to her or in her role as protector of the city of Assisi, such reports would have been used to confirmed the quality of her life.[105] Therefore, if the output of the landscape system is a union in love with God that is manifested through the fruits of the Spirit, it is necessary to examine Clare's own writings in order to glimpse her own mind.

Thus, the second situation where the activity of love can be discerned in the life of Clare is in her rule. As it has been seen, Clare considered her vocation to follow Christ in poverty through monastic life as a gift from God and hence the community was an important structure in Clare's life. We have already touched upon Clare's inner life of prayer and the model of holy poverty to which she ascribed and through which she defined her life in community. If as I have suggested the dynamic of the inner landscape is found in a mutual exchange of love and if this love overflows into the wider community, then a reflection of this mutuality of love might be expected to be evident in Clare's rule.

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[104] Benedicta Ward, 1982, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*, London: Scolar Press, 186.

[105] There were 25 reports of healing in which ten people were named. Many of these healings were related to everyday events like choking or a child getting a stone caught in his nose. Holding the Blessed Sacrament, Clare was reported to have confronted the marauding Saracen troops of Frederick II and sent them fleeing. (The Process of Canonization, 2.20; 3.18; 4.14; 9.2; 10.9; 12.8; 14.3; 18.6) Secondly, Vitalis de Aversa was commanded by the Emperor to take Assisi and his departure from the city walls was attributed to Clare's prayer. (The Process of Canonization, 3.19; 3.18; 4.14; 9.2; 10.9; 12.8; 14.3; 18.6)

Although poverty is central to Clare's rule, what distinguishes it from other Benedictine-based rules of her time is that it is non-hierarchical. The Abbess is seen to stand in the midst of the sisters as a servant. For Clare, the Abbess:

> Should strive as well to preside over the others more by her virtues and holy behavior than by her office, so that, moved by her example, the sisters might obey her more out of love than out of fear. She should avoid particular friendships, lest by loving some more than others she cause scandal among all. She should console those who are afflicted, and be, likewise, the last refuge for those who are disturbed; for, if they fail to find in her the means of nealth, the sickness of despair might overcome the weak. She should preserve the common life in everything, especially regarding all in the church, dormitory, refectory, infirmary, and in clothing.[106]

Clare depicts the Abbess as taking part fully in the practices of communal and liturgical life. The Abbess' power derived from love rather than the authority of the position. The rule constructed by Clare, out of six previous rules, depicts a non-hierarchical pattern of life.[107] This pattern of life contrasted with the authoritarian, hierarchical structure of Benedictine monasticism at that time.[108]

The democratic nature of the pattern of life is reinforced in the rule through the responsibility that Clare invests in her sisters. For example, she expects all the sisters to be involved in major decision-making such as admitting a new member, incurring debt, or choosing sisters for different offices within the community.[109] Furthermore, Clare considered her sisters as mirrors of Christ to each other and to the world and therefore it was each sister's responsibility 'to preserve among themselves the unity of mutual love'.[110] Therefore, Clare expects that the love of Christ 'be shown outwardly in [their] deeds'.[111] From this, it might be surmised that the pattern of mutual self-giving love associated with union is found at the centre of the communal life that Clare envisioned in her rule.

Caroline Bynum points out that the people in the twelfth century were aware

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[106] The Rule of St Clare, IV. 6-10, in *Francis and Clare.*
[107] Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, 1994, A Medival Woman's Utopian Vision: The Rule of St. Clare of Assisi, in *Body and Soul. Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 66, 69.
[108] Ibid., 69.
[109] The Rule of St Clare 2.1; 4.14, 18, in *Francis and Clare.*
[110] Ibid., 10.4.
[111] The Testament of Saint Clare, 18-23, 59-60 in *Clare of Assisi.*

of 'disjunctions that may exist between inner and outer'.[112] Although the testimonies in the Process of Canonization may conform to the criteria that was expected, these reports indicate to a certain degree that Clare lived according to the ideals of service and humility that she dictates in her Rule. Therefore, the 'unity of mutual love' about which Clare wrote and in which she strove to live may be the fruit of a union of love between God and Clare, thus providing us with an indication of Clare's inner life overflowing and cohering in her outer life.

When the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is evaluated in the terminology of systems, the output in the landscape has been named as union with God. Although Clare does not write about altered states of stages of prayer, in her letters to Agnes and in her Rule, the exchange of love and unity through love can be identified as themes. If these themes are indicative of Clare's union of love with God in Christ, through the testimonies of her sisters, this love appears to overflow into the networks of her other relationships.

Thus far, I have explored the life and writings of Clare of Assisi with respect to the structure, function and change in the 'landscape of the soul'. This provides us with an example of how the model might be applied in an individual case. However, does this usage address those problems that I raised in the first chapter? That is, does the model balance a futuristic outlook in spiritual life? Does the model provide a framework in which we can situate different understandings of mysticism? In the following section, I will look at how, using the model, Clare's life and writings contribute to these issues.

4.4 Contemporary Issues

In the first chapter, I asked what would happen if we looked at spiritual life as a landscape instead of using the metaphor of a pilgrim journeying through a landscape. With the pilgrim model, we can become goal-orientated and over-futuristic in our outlook. Consequently, other people and our environment can be

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[112] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1982, Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?, in *Jesus as Mother*, 98.

devalued. In addition, we can reduce the goal of union with God to numerous types of altered states of consciousness or different stages in prayer or spiritual life. We can then focus on these states and lose sight of God. In the reflective state of model development, I suggested that the landscape model may provide an alternative to the pilgrimage model. First, it is hypothesised that the landscape model focuses attention on the encounter with God in the present moment and second, that this model provides a framework in which we can situate the different understandings of the mystical that can arise in spiritual direction. In this section, I will look at the balance between future and present in Clare's life, an understanding of mysticism that emerges from her life using this model and finally, the implications from the study of the life and writing of Clare of Assisi that may be of use in spiritual direction.

4.4.1.The Place of the Future and the Present in Clare's Life

In the pilgrimage model, the pilgrim travels towards the Kingdom of God. How the Kingdom of God is conceived will vary according to the matrix of a person's life. For Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*, the Kingdom was a city through which he would walk and ride with the King of Glory.[113] For Clare, the Kingdom of God is described through the images of espousal and marriage. In her letters, Clare's vision is fixed upon the goal of eternal life, which is the heavenly marriage with Christ, and the happiness that this will bring.[114] Although poverty is to be embraced out of our love for God who revealed love by becoming poor, nevertheless Clare does not hesitate to draw attention to the 'ineffable delights, eternal riches and honors' that are bestowed through the imitation of the poverty of Christ.[115] However, when we look at Clare's life using the landscape model, it can be seen that she balances the future goal of union with God in eternity with the present reality of God

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[113] John Bunyan,[no date], *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 178.
[114] The First Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 1, in *Francis and Clare*. The same theme of the riches of eternal life is repeated in her last letter, written shortly before her death. The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 28-29, in *Francis and Clare*.
[115] The First Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 8-14, in *Francis and Clare*. The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 28-29, in *Francis and Clare*.

in the day to day life of her vocation.

First, it can be seen that although Clare demonstrates a single-minded pursuit of the imitation of the poverty of Christ in her life and letters, she remains in touch with the contingencies of a communal, monastic life. It is debated whether Clare had intended to lead a monastic life when she fled to Francis.[116] Nevertheless, this is the type of life that was imposed upon her. Therefore, the monastery with its daily round of offices, prayer and work was the situation in which she pursued the ideal of radical Gospel poverty. Clare reveals astuteness in her regulations aimed at protecting the community from the political and social intrigues which were common in her age. For example, to protect her sisters from the power struggles among the nobility that could result in a lay woman being named the head of a community, she stated that only a woman who had professed their form of life could be elected Abbess.[117]

The communal life that Clare envisioned was more open and flexible than what had been legislated for her in previous rules. Among the innovations found in her rule, are the lack of economic support, the treatment of enclosure, the practice of silence, freedom to make personal choices and communal decision-making. Clare strove for over thirty years for the right to possess nothing. In contrast to monasteries of her time, the sisters were only to have enough land for a vegetable garden. For the rest of their sustenance, they were to rely on the gifts of others and their own work.[118] Whereas in Ugolino's Rule, given to the community at San Damiano by the Cardinal Archbishop of Ostia and Velletri in 1217, the enclosure is to be strictly kept for the whole of a sister's life, Clare allows that sisters may leave the enclosure for useful, reasonable and approved reasons.[119] Similarly, silence is perpetual in the Ugolino's Rule, but Clare rules that sisters can 'communicate

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[116] Frances Ann Thom, 1987, Clare of Assisi: New Leader of Women, in *Medieval Religious Women*, Vol. 2, ed. L Shank and J Nichols, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Pubs., 198; Clara Gennaro, 1996, Clare, Agnes, and Their Earliest Followers: From the Poor Ladies of San Damiano to the Poor Clares, in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, eds., Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi, trans. Margery J Schneider, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 39-40.
[117] The Rule of Saint Clare, 4.1, in *Francis and Clare.*
[118] Ibid., 6.4-6, 7.1-5, in *Francis and Clare.* Also see, Frances Ann Thom, 1987, Clare of Assisi, 198-200, Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, 1994, A Medieval Woman's Utopian Vision, 70-71.
[119] The Rule of Saint Clare, 2.7, in *Francis and Clare.*

always and everywhere, briefly and in a low tone of voice, whatever is necessary.'[120] Moreover, within the freedom allowed by the Rule, Clare expects the sisters to take responsibility for their lives such as in the practices of fasting or in the use of gifts sent to them.[121] In important community matters, Clare expects all the sisters to participate in decision-making.[122] However, Clare's Rule could reflect nothing more than a creative innovation inspired by the ideal of Gospel poverty.

Two themes can be identified in the Rule: the pursuit of poverty and the 'unity of mutual love'. At the centre of Clare's Rule is the *forma vitae* or 'form of life' that Francis gave to the sisters at San Damiano in which he exhorts them to 'live always in this most holy life and in poverty'.[123] From Clare's letters, it can be seen that poverty is linked with union. For example, in her third letter to Agnes Clare writes:

> Therefore, as the glorious Virgin of virgins carried [Christ] materially in her body, you, too, by following in His footprints, especially [those] of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body. And you will hold Him by Whom you and all things are held together, [thus] possessing that which, in comparison with the other transitory possessions of this world, you will possess more securely.[124]

The image of being the mother of Christ and of spiritual pregnancy was one of the metaphors present in the matrix of Clare's time.[125] Caroline Walker Bynum suggests that this metaphor of spiritual motherhood is indicative of union with Christ.[126] Thus, it may be conjectured that for Clare, the imitation and contemplation of the poverty of Christ provided a means of union with Christ.

The second theme found in the Rule and repeated in the Testament is the 'unity of mutual love and peace'.[127] Through the imitation of Christ, in their vocation

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[120] The Rule of Saint Clare, 5.4, in *Francis and Clare.*
[121] The Third Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 29-41, in *Francis and Clare.* The Rule of Saint Clare, 8.5-6, in *Francis and Clare.*
[122] The Rule of Saint Clare, 4.11-18, in *Francis and Clare.*
[123] Ibid., 6.2-3, in *Francis and Clare.*
[124] The Second Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 7, in *Francis and Clare.*
[125] Caroline Walker Bynum, 1992, Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion, in *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 146.
[126] Ibid., 146.
[127] The Rule of Saint Clare, 4.2, 16; 8.; 9.1; 10.5, in *Francis and Clare.* The Testament of Saint Clare, 18-20, in *Francis and Clare.*

to poverty, the sisters are to be mirrors of Christ to each other and to the wider world.[128] For Clare, love is one of the fruits of poverty and it is with Christ's love that the sisters are to act.[129] Therefore, Clare presumes a union with Christ at the heart of communal life that is manifested in the activities of daily life. Such a union, she tells Agnes, is fostered by daily studying the mirror of Christ in prayer. Furthermore, it has been seen that the Eucharist and the Word of God are also means through which union with God can occur.

Clare depicts a vision of a life dedicated to achieving union with Christ. In her Rule, Clare encapsulates the essence of this vocation through these two themes of poverty and mutual love. Moreover, this vocation is received daily as a gift from God.[130] Therefore, although Clare's life is oriented towards the heavenly kingdom, she balances this with a focus on a present union with God, the fruit of which is mutual love. Thus, as Frances Ann Thom observes, Clare's life is in harmony with God and with creation.[131]

I have hypothesised that the strength of the model of the 'landscape of the soul' is that it focuses attention on the encounter with God in the present moment. It is here that human will becomes aligned with God's will and human action harmonised with God's one action. If this is so, what can the model say about Clare's life? From the foregoing discussion, the model highlights that Clare lived within the matrix or horizon of her time. Following Francis, she embraced the ideal of poverty as the imitation of Christ. Moreover, her vocation is defined by the call to a life of radical poverty lived within a monastic community. This communal life provided the background in which scripture, the Word of God, the Eucharist and prayer acted as corridors of communication. Here, through the transforming love of Christ, union could occur. That the fruit of this mutual love overflowed into the common life of the monastery and into the local community is witnessed by her contemporaries as well as evident in her structuring of communal life.

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[128] The Testament of Saint Clare, 6, in *Francis and Clare.*
[129] The First Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 25, in *Francis and Clare.*
[130] The Testament of Saint Clare, 1, in *Francis and Clare.*
[131] Frances Ann Thom, 1987, Clare of Assisi, 201.

4.4.2 The Understanding of the Mystical in Clare's Life

In spiritual life, the goal of union with God can come to overshadow God. In this way, attention may be given to altered states of consciousness or to special states of prayer or life. If we look at Clare's life and writings using the model of the 'landscape of the soul', then altered states of consciousness or stages become secondary and other criteria emerge.

In a geology of experiencing, it can be seen that Clare's conversion to the poor Christ was a turning point in her life. Moreover, from her letters this conversion was sustained daily through prayer and a clinging 'to the footprints' of Christ.[132] Although Clare was reported to have had visions, and perhaps an altered state of consciousness related to prayer, these appear to be secondary to Clare except where she can use her experiences as edification for her sisters. For example, Sister Benvenuta of Lady Diambre of Assisi testified that Clare:

> Had taught her to love God above all else; secondly, taught her to totally and frequently confess her sins; thirdly, instructed her to always have the Lord's passion in her memory [133]

If, as Marco Bartoli suggests, sisters in community related their visions as a way of teaching and strengthening faith, then it might be postulated that Clare recounted her vision of the Office of the Nativity in order to instruct her sisters in the ways of God.[134] The experiences that are most prominent in the writings of Clare are those that depict such things as the generosity, love and joy that are to be found in Christ.

A geomorphology of growing has been associated with stages in prayer or life. Clare did not write any systematic works on prayer. However, in her letters to Agnes, we find the advice to 'gaze upon...consider...contemplate...[and] imitate' Christ.[135] However, the outstanding developmental feature in Clare's life appears to be her struggle for the privilege of poverty. Clara Gennaro writes:

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[132] The Third Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 24-27, in *Francis and Clare.*
[133] Process of Canonization, 2.2; 3.30; 4.16; 9.9 in *Clare of Assisi.*
[134] Marco Bartoli, 1993, *Clare of Assisi*, n. 31, 228.
[135] The Second Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 20, in *Francis and Clare.*

> We should note, by the way, that nothing – neither fasts, nor vigils, nor prayers – so purified Clare as this secret and profound struggle that marked her entire life.[136]

The poverty of Christ provided a model for Clare. It might be said that Clare's insistence on poverty is her insistence on the choice of Christ. Clare's pursuit of poverty permeates her whole life, as captured in the essence of her Rule for the community. Thus, although stages of prayer or life are not depicted in Clare's writings, she points towards a single-minded focus on Christ that characterises the processes of apprehension and purification-illumination.

An ecology of relating can be linked to an encounter with the mystery of God's self-revelation in the life and death of Christ. This encounter can lead to a relationship with God and subsequently, to union seen as a union of love and action that overflows into a wider context. In her letters, Clare uses the images of the mirror, marriage and the Eucharist to depict union with God. This union is seen as an exchange of love between the soul and Christ who became poor for our sakes. Moreover, this love is not exclusive of others. In their testimony, Clare's contemporaries describe her love and service for others as overflowing from her prayer into the details of everyday life. With respect to the community, Clare describes this love in terms of 'the unity of mutual love and peace'.[137] Therefore, it could be postulated that the encounter with God in Christ occurs in daily life out of which emerges the union of love.

By the standards of her day, Clare would have been accorded the status of a mystic on the basis of her visions. However, through the model of the 'landscape of the soul' with its systems of geology, geomorphology and ecology that we are able to see Clare's everyday life as a place of encounter and union with God, a place where she is reported to have enjoined her sisters to praise God in 'all peoples and creatures'.[138]

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[136] Clara Gennaro, 1996, Clare, Agnes, and Their Earliest Followers, 43.
[137] The Rule of Saint Clare, 4. 6, in *Francis and Clare.*
[138] Process of Canonization, 14. 9, in *Clare of Assisi.*

4.4.3 The Use of the Model in Spiritual Direction

The example of Clare has been used to demonstrate the application of the model of the 'landscape of the soul' to an individual case study. From the use of this model, some dynamics in spiritual life can be recognised. First, Jesus Christ is the centre of Christian spiritual life. Second, all the details of our lives need to be related to him and from him everything else flows. That is, our lives are to be conformed to Christ's life. Clare described this in terms of the imitation of the poverty of Christ. Third, Christ can be encountered in the Eucharist, the Word of God and in prayer. Fourth, the exchange of love between Christ and the soul leads to service and the building up of a mutuality of love in the networks of our other relationships. Finally, out of the coherence of contemplation and action, a creative, joyous risk-taking can emerge.

Granted that the landscape model may be used to look at the life of an historical person, how might it be used in spiritual direction? The model provides a specialised way to view spiritual life. From the study of Clare, it could be postulated that the model might be useful when a person has lost sight of the centrality of Christ. This can happen if a person becomes focused on having particular experiences or is unable to identify those areas in life where Christ is encountered.

In Clare's life, the single-minded focus on Christ is at the heart of the dynamics of spiritual life. Sometimes it is possible to lose sight of God as revealed in Christ particularly when this revelation does not conform to our conceptions.[139] Through the examination of the structure of the 'landscape of the soul', it may be possible to identify preconceptions about God which influence how we perceive and interpret our experiences. Moreover, the presence of God can be sought through observation of the activities related to the function of the landscape. Using the model, the questions that are asked in spiritual direction concern what is happening and where God is in the particular situation.

Like Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*, a person may become overly future

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[139] The story of Sam recorded by Janet Ruffing gives an instance where encounters with God are discounted when they do not meet with preconceived ideas. (Janet Ruffing, 1989, *Uncovering Stories of Faith*, 23-33.)

orientated and lose sight of the wider community. This can sometimes be identified in spiritual direction when the topic of conversation revolves around 'my salvation' or a person is caught up in journeying towards the Kingdom of God. Both are ways in which a person can refuse to face issues in their relationship with God. Clare provides an example where the future goal and the present transformation in love are held in balance. The landscape model focuses on the present moment. Through the analysis of the activities that are present, the model seeks to show what is happening as well as helping re-focus attention upon God. Moreover, through the evaluation of change, the model can also brings to awareness the wider networks in our lives and the place of love within them.

Like the student who thought that an experience of pure consciousness made her a Christian mystic, people can associate the mystical life with special types of experiences. However, Clare shows through the geology of experiencing that the subjective state that best describes our relationship with God is one of love. Through the geomorphology of growing, she demonstrates the single-minded attentiveness to Christ that characterises a deepening love that leads to a mutual self-giving in the ecology of relating. Thus, these parameters can be used to re-focus on Christ and as a reminder of the primacy of love.

Sometimes a person will state that 'God is absent from their lives' and that 'nothing happens in prayer'.[140] At times like this, the landscape model can help through the examination of the corridors of communication in a person's life. For Clare some of these corridors were the Eucharist, the Word of God and prayer. However, by focusing upon the corridors in a person's life, it may be possible to identify those times and places in which a person feels closest to God such as in the apocryphal story of the women who found God when she knitted.

Spiritual life can become detached from everyday life. Consequently, God and the things of God can be restricted to certain times and places. Or alternatively, there is the danger of people 'becoming like so many 'charitable' do-gooders who are

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[140] William A Barry and William J Connolly, 1982, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 69.

always interfering with the lives of others'.[141] Echoing Paul in 1 Cor. 13, Anthony de Mello observes that 'it is, alas, possible for you to give your goods to feed the poor and your body to be burnt and to still not have love'.[142] Through the geomorphology of growing, Clare reveals that our vocation is a gift that is given to us daily. It is through our various vocations, those patterns of life in which we hear and respond to the call of God, that we may become a channel for the love of God. Clare describes it as becoming mirrors of Christ.

Thus, through the use of the landscape model, it is possible to address some of the issues that may arise in spiritual direction. However, although the landscape model may be theoretically useful in a case study or in imaginatively reviewing possible situations in spiritual direction, is it relevant to contemporary praxis? In the next chapter, I follow up this question through a survey of spiritual directors and those who are interested in the spiritual dimension in therapeutic situations.

4.5 Summary of Chapter Four: Using the 'Landscape of the Soul to examine the life and writings of Clare of Assisi

With this chapter, I have returned to the practical situation in the pastoral cycle. Previously, in the reflective phase of the cycle, a model based on landscape was postulated. In this chapter, I have applied the model in a particular case study. Clare of Assisi was chosen because she is a historical person who is open to enquiry through her writings and those of her contemporaries and because she provides an example of a mystic within the Christian tradition. The life and writings of Clare of Assisi were examined within the parameters of landscape structure, function and change.

The structure of a landscape can be described in terms of its emergent properties of matrix, patches and corridors. It was seen that Clare lived and wrote from within the matrix of her time, a matrix that was characterised by a widespread desire to return to Gospel sources and what was perceived to be the life of the early

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[141] Anthony de Mello quoted by Carlos G Valles, 1987, *Unencumbered by Baggage – Father Anthony de Mello: A Prophet for our Times*, Anand, India: Gujarat Shitya Prakash, 152-153.
[142] Ibid., 153.

Christians. Similarly, her Christo-centrism is marked by a strong devotion to the humanity of Christ, another characteristic of the time. Moreover, to describe union with God in her writings, she employs commonly-used motifs drawn from the Eucharist, marriage and the image of the mirror. The visions associated with Clare were examined as distinguishing patches. For Clare, the Eucharist, the Word of God and prayer were identified as corridors of communication with God.

The function of a landscape can be viewed through the activities associated with a geology of experiencing, a geomorphology of growing and an ecology of relating. At the level of the geology, Clare attributed her conversion to Francis of Assisi. However, through such landscape corridors as the Eucharist, scripture and the liturgy, God's call through Francis was sustained. In the landscape model, geomorphology has been associated with growing. Clare, like her contemporaries, practised various forms of mortification. Although such practices provided a means of growing closer to God, it was through her struggle for the privilege of poverty, that her single-minded focus on God in the poverty of Christ was deepened. At the level of the ecology of relating, in Clare's letters and in her relations within her community, it is possible to identify a dynamic of love.

Change in the 'landscape of the soul' represents the outcome of the activities of experiencing, growing and relating. In the 'landscape of the soul', it has been postulated that the output of the landscape system is union with God. Furthermore, it has been suggested that this union is manifested in an overflowing of love into the wider community. Through the testimonies relating to her life and in the structuring of community life found in Clare's Rule, it is possible to identify the ideal of a service based on love.

If the life and writings of Clare of Assisi are viewed through the lens of the model of the 'landscape of the soul', a pattern of life can be seen where Christ is encountered in the activities of everyday life out of which a union of love emerges. Clare balances union with God in eternity with a union in the present reality of her vocation. From this perspective, altered states such as visions become secondary. What Clare demonstrates is a single-minded focus on Christ that provides the context for the rest of her life and her relationships within that life.

The application of the landscape model to the life of Clare demonstrates some of the dynamics of spiritual life. Through the use of the model, we are reminded of the centrality of Christ; that it is by our love and not by our subjective experiences that the quality of our relationship with God can be evaluated; that we encounter Christ as we are in the present moment; and that each of us has a vocation in response to the call of God and that it is within each of these vocations that our lives in Christ are enacted.

This brief study of Clare demonstrates an application of the model to an historical person. Moreover, it suggests ways in which the unfolding narrative of a person in spiritual direction could also be seen against the backdrop of the model of the 'landscape of the soul'. However, whether or not anyone would want to use the model in this way is discussed in the following chapter, in which I explore the potential use of the model with a survey of a group of spiritual directors and therapists.

5. TESTING THE MODEL: A SURVEY OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS AND THERAPISTS

This chapter continues to test the model of the 'landscape of the soul' in praxis. In the previous chapter, I applied the model to an individual case study. In this chapter, I will review the results of a survey that I conducted among spiritual directors and therapists. The purpose of the survey was to assess the potential usefulness of the landscape model in spiritual direction.

In Chapter 1, I identified a problem that could arise for some people with the use of the pilgrimage model in spiritual direction; that a person's spiritual life becomes goal-orientated rather than focused on God. Moreover, the goal can become confused with altered states of consciousness or stages in prayer or life. Furthermore, I suggested that syncretistic conceptions of the mystical can underlie the understanding of the participants in spiritual direction.

In the second part of this thesis, corresponding to the reflective stage in the pastoral cycle, I proposed a model based on the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul'. In an attempt to comprehend some of the different understandings associated with mysticism, I thematically mapped three general themes: mysticism as an altered state of consciousness, mysticism as a stage in growth and development, and mysticism as an encounter and relationship with God.

The return to the practical situation of spiritual direction provides an opportunity to evaluate the landscape model. To test the relevancy and usefulness of the model of the 'landscape of the soul', I surveyed a group of spiritual directors and therapists. In this chapter, I address two issues: first, the different understandings of the mystical that can be found in spiritual direction and second, the potential usefulness of the landscape model as a framework in which different understandings of mysticism can be accommodated.

I begin with a review of the survey design. This is followed by an analysis and discussion of the data that was collected.

5.1 Survey Design

5.1.1 Procedure

A survey questionnaire was constructed using guidelines given in survey construction manuals.[1] Initially, the survey was administered to a small pilot group. On the basis of these interviews, some of the questions were restructured and changes made in the diagrammatic representation of the model. Reading guides were developed to help analyse and code the information in matrixes. Some descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the data collected in the survey.

5.1.2 Overview of the Survey

The survey design was tripartite. The objectives of the survey were:

1. Part One: to explore the understanding and experience of mysticism among a sample of spiritual directors and therapists.
2. Part Two: to probe the reaction of the spiritual directors and therapists to accounts of mysticism in the narratives of others.
3. Part Three: to introduce the model of the 'landscape of the soul' and invite the participants to assess the potential usefulness of the model in relation to their life and work.

The survey consisted of two questionnaires and open-ended questions. Some of these questions were drawn from the work of others. The full restructured survey questionnaire is found in Appendix B.

Had opportunity permitted, I would have liked to have introduced the model to the spiritual directors and therapists and then given them time to experiment with it in their work. Although, the former was possible, the latter was not.[2] Therefore, the survey is limited to the testing of the potential usefulness of the model rather than its actual usefulness in practice.

5.1.3 Sampling

Snowball sampling was used because this type of sampling is effective in

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[1] See Earl R Babbie, 1973, *Survey Research Methods*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., and William A Belson, 1986, Validity in Survey Research, Aldershot, Hants: Gower Publishing Company Limited.

[2] In spiritual direction, a director may see a person only a few times a year. Therefore, an occasion when the model might have been useful for a person may not have arisen within the time scale that was available.

targeting a particular interest group.[3] Three people from Edinburgh, Glasgow and London were asked for names of spiritual directors or therapists who might be interested in taking part in the survey. From these suggestions, a pool of thirty people willing to take part was created. The name of each person was numbered. From the pool of these names, a selection was made by using computer-generated random numbers. Originally, it was intended that twenty-five people would be surveyed but in the end twenty-eight people were interviewed in order to get a sample of twenty interviews that could be analysed. Eight interviews were discarded for the following reasons: the interviewee was not Christian (2), the interviewee refused to allow the interview to be recorded (3), the interviewee refused to answer all the questions (2), and the tape recorder failed (1).

Most interviews were conducted at the person's office or work place. However, two interviews were conducted at the person's home and two in a reasonably private place. The interviews were tape-recorded and written notes were also taken.

5.1.4 Validation

After the analysis was completed an interrater reliability check was carried out to test the validity of the analysis and the coding of the open-ended questions. Six people trained in social science methodologies were asked to code three questions selected from the survey. Four of the cross-check surveys were returned and analysed. A discussion of the validity and reliability of the survey is found in Appendix C.

5.2 Population Sample

I have hypothesised that the model of the 'landscape of the soul' provides a framework through which various understandings of mysticism can be seen in relation to each other. Because this model is heuristic rather than operational, the question which needs to be addressed is whether it could potentially provide an adequate and a useful construct for those involved in listening to the narratives of others. The focus of the survey was the use of the landscape model in spiritual

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[3] Matthew B Miles and A Michael Huberman, 1994, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, London: SAGE Publications, 28.

direction. Therefore, I selected spiritual directors as a population sample. Moreover, spiritual directors and therapists are easier to identify than mystics. At this particular stage in model development, it was necessary to test the model against the complexity of the situations in which a variety of understandings and approaches to mysticism can arise. Therefore, the lives and work of spiritual directors and therapists were chosen as the most efficient way of accessing the broad field of spiritual life, particularly as it relates to mysticism.

The group which is referred to as therapists consisted of psychotherapists, educational psychologists and counsellors. Before proceeding with a description of the survey population, it might be queried why therapists have been included. In spiritual direction and therapeutic situations, time and space are set aside to allow the unfolding of an individual's story. Although in therapeutic situations the focus is upon the individual rather than on the movements of the Holy Spirit, many therapists are recognising and beginning to work with the spiritual dimension in human life.[4] Therefore, in so far as elements related to the mystical may emerge within a person's story, the model of the 'landscape of the soul' may be relevant to the practice of therapists and they may have useful criticisms to make about it.

In this investigation, a diverse sample was desired in order to discover the opinions and reactions of a broad spectrum of people. The population sample consisted of spiritual directors and therapists who were all Christian both practising and non-practising. All the therapists were concerned with spiritual life within the therapeutic situation and all acted as spiritual directors in non-therapeutic settings. Therefore, all the informants shared three qualifications: all were from a Christian background: all were explicitly interested in the spiritual and mystical dimensions arising in the narrative situation; and all were actively involved in spiritual direction.

The composition of the survey sample is illustrated in Figure 5.1.[5] The group was divided evenly between male and female and consisted of therapists, ordained, and lay spiritual directors. The category of ordained included both pastors

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[4] For instance, this can be seen in the creation of the Institute for Psychotherapy and Spirituality that has been established in London by a group of Jungian analysts. Similarly, in books such as those by the psychiatrist, Gerald May, the interrelationships between psychology and spirituality are being explored. (Gerald G May, 1982, *Will and Spirit*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers; Gerald G May, 1982, *Care of Mind: Care of Spirit*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers.)

[5] All figures and tables are located at the end of the chapter.

and professional religious. Half of this group were also ordained. However, for the purposes of the interview, these people stated that they were speaking from their positions as therapists. Of the respondents 16 were Protestant, 1 was Roman Catholic and 3 were not affiliated with any denomination at the time.

In order to elicit a broad spectrum of comments, the age range or work experience was not restricted. Therefore, in the sample, the youngest person interviewed was 32 and the oldest 79. Thus, the ages spanned 47 years with the average age being 54. The age distribution is illustrated in Figure 5.2.

In this study, work refers to listening to the narratives of others either in a pastoral or therapeutic situation. Age and work experience as a spiritual director or therapist need not be related. For example, a pastor can begin to act as a spiritual director early in his or her career whereas a lay person may begin this ministry in retirement. Therefore, chronological age cannot be used as an indication of experience as a spiritual director or therapist. Work experience ranged from 3 to 52 years and can be seen in Figure 5.3. The modal average, a measure of central tendency that indicates the most frequently obtained value, was 3 years. The mean average number of years of experience was 18.

From the preceding, it can been seen that the sample population was diverse in orientation with both ordained and laity represented, as well as those with a therapeutic background. Although those interviewed ranged in age from the thirties to the seventies, the majority were middle-aged. Experience as a spiritual director ranged from those with relatively little experience to those who were very experienced.

5.3 Analysis of Survey Data

5.3.1 Part A: Understanding and Experience of Mysticism

The purpose of the first part of the survey was to construct a personal picture of the understanding and experience of mysticism of each interviewee. This section included four open-ended survey questions and one questionnaire. We will now look at each of the questions that were asked, before we go on to analyse and discuss the results.

Belief about Ultimate Reality

1. Please reflect for a moment and then in one or two short sentences state your most deeply held belief about ultimate reality.

This question was based on work by Deane H Shapiro, Jr.[6] Assumptions and form part of a person's horizon and therefore they influence the way in which the world is viewed as well as the questions which are asked in any situation. Shapiro asked a group of participants at a conference on mysticism to state their most deeply held belief about the nature of ultimate reality. Through these statements, he hoped to make explicit the participants' 'verbal ground of being', that is, their belief about ultimate reality.[7] The participants noted several problems in undertaking this exercise. First, the meaning of such words as 'belief', 'ultimate' and 'reality' were queried. Another problem involved sorting the 'most deeply held' belief from other beliefs which were held. Finally, beliefs which are experienced as 'a felt experience' were difficult to verbalise and analyse.[8] Shapiro examined the statements from the conference participants along four dimensions: the nature of ultimate reality (benign, neutral, negative); the orientation (theistic, nontheistic); human control (assertive, passive); and the path (universal, particular).[9]

The intent of using Shapiro's question in the survey was to draw attention to some of the presuppositions underlying the person's understanding of mysticism. The statements were analysed according to content and the answers were coded using the above four dimensions and eight variables as defined by Shapiro. The answers were plotted in a matrix to facilitate analysis (Table 5.1).[10]

Answers to open-ended interview questions are frequently narrative in nature

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[6] Deane H Shapiro, Jr., 1989, Exploring Our Most Deeply Held Belief about Ultimate Reality, *ReVision* 12(1): 15-28.
[7] Ibid., 16.
[8] Deane H Shapiro, Jr., 1989, Exploring Our Most Deeply Held Belief about Ultimate Reality, *ReVision* 12(1): 16.
[9] Ibid., 16-18.
[10] In the study by Deane Shapiro, the people who provided the statements of belief were attending a conference on mysticism. Although it is not known, it might be assumed that their interest in spiritual life and practical experience would be similar to the group of individuals who participated in the survey. Assuming an analogous group and coding practice, a comparison of the survey answers was made with the answers obtained by Deane Shapiro. Both the numbers under each variable were converted to a percentage and correlated. The answers on the two matrixes were closely associated with $r = 0.90$ at $p \geq 0.01$.

and use implicit rather than explicit statements. Therefore, a straight reading and coding of text is not always possible because key words or phrases are absent. The Lyn M Brown research group formulated a theoretical framework and a method for creating reading guides that would take into account different 'voices' in narrative responses.[11] A reading guide provides questions for use in the analysis of open-ended questions. In addition, it supplies a framework for a worksheet on which an individual's response can be recorded before being coded in a comprehensive matrix. The work of Brown was used as the basis for developing guides that could be used in the analysis of some of the open-ended questions used my survey. The parameters for these reading guides were drawn from the assumptions underlying the questions as well as from the landscape model. Using the guides involved several readings of the text with each reading adopting a different perspective associated with the landscape model. Tables containing brief notes and questions were constructed as reading guides and worksheets for the interpretation and coding of the responses from some of the open-ended questions in the survey (for example, see Table 5.1). With each reading, relevant portions of the text were underlined in a different coloured pen, enabling the construction of a coding matrix summary such as that found in Table 5.2.[12]

The Meaning of the Word 'Mysticism'

As has been seen, there are numerous conceptions of what the words 'mysticism' or 'mystical' may mean. This problem provided the starting point for the exploration of the understanding and the perceived presence or absence of the mystical in the lives and work of the spiritual directors or therapists who were interviewed.

2. What do you mean when you use the word 'mysticism'?

Because there is a lack of consensus concerning the nature and definition of

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[11] Lyn M Brown, Mark B Tappan, Carol Gilligan, Barbara M Miller, and Diane E Argyris, 1989, Reading for Self and Moral Voice: A Method for Interpreting Narratives of Real-Life Moral Conflict and Choice, in *Entering the Circle: Hermeneutic Investigation in Psychology*, eds. Martin J Packer and Richard B Addison, Albany, N. Y.: State of University of New York Press, 141- 164.

[12] In the method postulated by Lyn M Brown et al., this move to a coding matrix is represented by two steps. First, a summary worksheet containing coding questions is completed for each interview. Second, these worksheets are collated into categorical typologies. In this study, the Notes and Questions for the Reading Guide sheet was constructed so that it could act as a summary sheet.

mysticism, it could not be assumed that the interviewer's use of the word and the interviewee's understanding would coincide. Therefore, the interviewees were asked to describe what they meant when they used the word mysticism. These replies provided a point of reference for the remainder of the interview.

The parameters for the reading guide were drawn from the three types of understanding related to mysticism that were explored during the construction of the landscape model. Therefore, the parameters define experiential (an altered state of consciousness), developmental, and relational perspectives associated with mysticism. It was assumed that the interviewees would describe their conceptions of mysticism from one or more of these perspectives and that one of these approaches could potentially predominate. A table, Reading Guide 5.3, containing brief notes and questions was constructed. The coding matrix summary is found in Table 5.4

An assumption was made that a person's understanding of mysticism would be related to their belief about ultimate reality. To check this, the consistency between those elements which both questions 1 and 2 shared, such as orientation, human control and path, was examined. The overall consistency between belief about ultimate reality and meaning of the word was 0.66 when the total number of inconsistencies were represented as a fraction of the total number of elements involved.

Mysticism can be approached from different resolutions. The reading guide and the coding matrix for this question took account of perspectives and some of the common characteristics associated with mysticism. Eighty-five percent of the interviewees described mysticism in terms of an experience. The word 'experience' can be misleading because it can be applied to a singular event or it can be used to indicate an ongoing relationship. In this study, the word 'experiential' has been reserved for the former and the word 'relational' for the latter type of experience. The usage of the word was not always clear in the statements given by the interviewees and of the experiential statements given in the survey, 47% of these could also be interpreted as suggesting a relational understanding. Overall, 45% of the interviewees understood mysticism as a particular type of experience, 45% described it in relational or experiential/relational terms and in 10 % no orientation could be discerned.

Personal Experiences of Mysticism

In the survey, two open-ended questions and a questionnaire were used to explore the understanding and experience of mysticism by the spiritual directors and therapists. The two open-ended questions about personal experience (no. 3 and no. 5) will be treated together although in the survey they were separated by the questionnaire of the Hood Scale for Mystical Experiences (no. 4).

The two questions concerning personal experience were:

3. Could you give a personal example of anything in your life which stands out in you memory as mystical?

Having explored his or her understanding of mysticism, the spiritual director was asked to give a personal example. It was not assumed that a person would be able to answer this question.

5. Between June 1969 and June 1970, Professor Sir Alister Hardy, requested through the media accounts of a certain type of religious experience. The following is an example of his request made in an article in the Observer on the 8th March 1970.

> To further his research...Professor Hardy is seeking the help of Observer readers. He is not at present studying the more ecstatic or mystical states, but a more general feeling exemplified in this following quotation from an address by Baroness Mary Stocks to the World Congress of Faiths:
>
> 'Beatrice Webb,' she said, in discussing her autobiography, 'was conscious of experiencing a sense and purpose outside herself - which she called 'feeling' and which was sometimes induced by appreciation of great music or corporate worship. But her experience went further than this nebulous, fleeting 'feeling' - because as a result of it she achieved a religious interpretation of the universe which satisfied and upheld her and enabled her to seek continuous guidance in prayer - and this without compromising her intellectual integrity.[13]

Do you have or have you been conscious of, and perhaps influenced by, some such power? How would you describe this sense of presence?

Questions 3 and 5 both dealt with personal experiences of mysticism. Question 3 was a follow-up to the previous question which explored what the interviewee meant when he or she used the word 'mysticism'. The reading guide

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[13] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 18.

pertinent to this question is found in Table 5.5. The information collected on these worksheets was subsequently transferred to the coding matrix summary found in Table 5.6.

Research with children and the reports submitted to the Religious Experience Research Centre suggest that childhood and adolescence are important periods for spiritual growth and development.[14] From the survey, the age patterns associated with reported experiences linked with the mystical are found in Figure 5.4.

Sixteen of the personal examples in my survey described a particular type of event which could be a single event (7) or a series of events occurring over a period of time (9). The antecedents to the experience varied from prayer, distress, nature, art and music, to reading. In two instances the experience was sudden and unexpected with no recognisable antecedent. As can be seen in Figure 5.5, prayer is an important precursor of experiences that were considered mystical.

In response to question 3, four interviewees described a sense of presence rather than an event. Three of these responses indicated a continual sense of presence although this is not equated with a continual focus upon God.

Question 5 probed the sense of the presence. A comparison between the reports of a sense of presence made in questions 3 and 5 was made and is represented in Figure 5.6, Comparison of Reports of a Sense of Presence. Two people reported that they did not have the ongoing sense of presence that was described by Alister Hardy in his example of Beatrice Webb. For six people, the sense of presence was intermittent and frequently associated with times of retreat.

Whether as discrete events or as a continuing sense of presence, the experiences described were complex. In some cases, the characteristics used to describe an event contradicted those used to portray a sense of presence. For example, whilst the orientation remained consistent in eight interviews, it was reversed in four other reports. Three people described a non-theistic event and a theistic sense of presence and one person did the reverse. Similarly, in four cases where an event was described as passive, an active relationship was linked with the

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[14] For example, see Alister Hardy, 1979, *the Spiritual Nature of Man*, 104-108; Edward Robinson, 1977, *The Original Vision*, 3-17.

sense of presence. This reflected a general association of passivity with unique 'mystical' events. In contrast, a more dynamic interrelationship was linked with a sense of presence.

The congruence between questions 1, 2, 3 and 5 was examined. The patterns were complex. For example, one person defined ultimate reality as non-theistic. In this person's understanding of mysticism, the orientation was theistic. Both of these perspectives were found in the experiences that he or she reported where a particular event was non-theistic and a continuing sense of presence was theistic. Therefore, what a person thought and expressed in the questions about belief and the meaning of mysticism did not necessarily correspond to the personal experiences that were described. The experiences of the unity of all things and the pure consciousness event are common definitive characteristics of mysticism in philosophical debates. However, the interviewees who reported these types of experiences did not refer to them in their understanding of the meaning of the word 'mysticism'.

4. The Hood Scale of Mystical Experiences (M Scale)

The fourth question consisted of a questionnaire constructed by Ralph W Hood, Jr. Hood created this measure to act as an empirical gauge of mystical experience.[15] The operational categories that he used were drawn from the characteristics of mystical experience described by W T Stace in Mysticism and Philosophy. These categories are ego quality (the experience of the loss of self); unifying quality ('the experience of the multiplicity of objects of perception as nevertheless united'); inner subjective quality ('the perceptions of an inner subjectivity to all things'); temporal/spatial quality ('timeless and spaceless'); noetic quality ('a source of valid knowledge'); ineffability ('the impossibility of expressing the experience in conventional language'); positive affect (the positive affective quality of the experience'); and religious quality ('the intrinsic sacredness of the experience'). The final scale, called the M Scale, consisting of 32 items is reproduced in question 4, found in Appendix B.

Hood administered the scale to a sample of 300 college students. Comparing Hood's M Scale with other measures such Taft's Ego Permissiveness Scale

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[15] Ralph W Hood Jr, 1975, The Construction and Preliminary Validation of a Measure of Reported Mystical Experience, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 14: 29-41.

(openness to experience), and using correlation matrices and factor analysis, the M Scale demonstrated internal reliability and external validity.[16] These conclusions were confirmed in a later study of 115 students conducted by Dale Caird.[17]

The use of the M Scale measure in this study was not intended to be comparable to the research of Hood or Caird. The sample size was too small and was not a random sample drawn from all spiritual directors or therapists interested in spiritual life. Also, both Hood and Caird used students ranging in age from 18 to 25, whereas this study used an older population with an age range from 32 to 79. Nevertheless, it was assumed that, even under these circumstances, the scale would retain its internal reliability. The purpose of including this questionnaire was to investigate an 'if - then' situation: if the M Scale is valid for a mixed population and if it is also valid for a small population sample, would the scores obtained by this measure correlate with the acceptance or rejection of the landscape model? In other words, if a person scored high on the M Scale, would that person be more likely to accept the model, to reject the model or would there be no relationship between the score on the M Scale and the perceived relevancy of the model?

Hood's questionnaire was administered to the interviewees and the M Score values calculated. The inclusion of Hood's questionnaire proved to be interesting for two reasons. First, although, the M Scores from Hood's and Caird's research cannot be validly compared because of the differences in the samples, nevertheless, it was observed that the scores in the survey were lower than in Hood's research. Whereas in the survey the M Scale for males was 89.3 (Standard Deviation (SD) = 5.4) and for females 91.5 (SD = 7.01), in Hood's research the M Scale for males was 109.3 (SD = 4.2) and the M Scale for females was 119.4 (SD = 18.8). However, as can be seen in Figure 5.7, in both cases females had the higher mean score and the greatest spread in scores. These results raise some questions concerning whether the differences arise as a consequence of the differences in sample sizes or whether the differences are related to the age of the respondents.[18]

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[16] Ralph W Hood Jr, 1975, The Construction and Preliminary Validation of a Measure of Reported Mystical Experience, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 14: 36-37.
[17] Dale Caird, 1988, The Structure of Hood's Mysticism Scale: A Factor-Analytic Study, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27(1): 122-126.
[18] The question related to the difference in ages might be addressed if Hood could re-sample his original population (now, 23 years later).

The second area of interest raised by the Hood M Scale was linguistic. Every interviewee objected to the wording on the M Scale. The scale was criticised for the use of double negatives, the inaccuracy of the language and its inadequacy of expression.

5.3.2 Part B: The Working Situation

The purpose of the second part of the interview schedule was to provide information about the narrative situations of those interviewed. This section contained four open-ended questions and one questionnaire.

The Listening Situation

The sample population was diverse with spiritual directors and therapists, lay and ordained persons. Thus, several combinations of roles were possible.

6. What is the nature of your listening situation?

The purpose of this question was to identify the listening situation of each person and where there was an option, to identify the perspective from which that person chose to speak. Eight of the interviewees described a therapeutic listening situation. The remainder of the sample the listening situation in spiritual directors.

7. How long have you been doing this?

The experience of the interviewees ranged from 3 to 52 years. The median number of years of experience was 14. (See Figure 5.3.)

8. What is the intensity of your listening situation?

Many people?
Few people?
In periods of less than a year?
In periods greater than a year?

Similar to question 7, the objective of question 8 on the intensity of the work was to obtain a more detailed description of the listening situation and the experience of the interviewee. Four patterns emerged: many people for periods greater than a year, many people for periods greater than and less than a year, few people for periods greater than a year, and a combination of many people for less than a year and few people for periods greater than a year. Table 5.7 illustrates the intensity of the listening. Two spiritual directors observed that in a retreat situation

they saw many people in a short time. In addition, a chaplaincy situation was also identified as an intensive practice. With the exception of one therapist who saw a few people over a long period of time, the therapeutic group had an intense pattern of listening in that they tended to see many people over a short period of time.

Personal Experience and Reports of Mystical Experiences

One of the dangers that can arise in spiritual direction and in a therapeutic situation is the imposition of the listener's presuppositions on to the narrative. There are no readily accessible specific studies in which the attitudes and personal experience of spiritual directors and therapists with respect to mysticism are correlated to their openness and receptivity to accounts of mysticism in the narratives of others. However, it was assumed, following Liebert, that a negative attitude and lack of understanding or experience may prejudice a person in identifying and accepting mystical elements in the accounts of others.[19] Therefore, the responses from some of the questions in Hood's questionnaire where compared with the spiritual director's or therapist's identification of such experiences in the practical situation.

9. In your work with other people, have the following experiences been reported?

1	An experience which was both timeless and spaceless.	N /Y
2	An experience which was incapable of being expressed in words.	N/ Y
3	An experience in which something greater than myself seemed to absorb me.	N /Y
4	An experience of profound joy.	N /Y
5	An experience in which I realised the oneness of myself with all things.	N /Y
6	An experience in which a new view of reality was revealed to me.	N/ Y
7	An experience which left me with a feeling of awe.	N /Y
8	An experience in which all things seemed to be conscious.	N /Y

In my pilot study, Hood's M Scale measure was repeated with the person being asked to respond from the point of view of their work. The original objective was to compare the responses which were given personally and those which were accepting mystical elements in the accounts of others.[20] Therefore, the responses from some of the questions in Hood's questionnaire where compared with the spiritual director's or therapist's identification of such experiences in the practical

[19] Elizabeth Liebert, 1989, Eyes to See and Ears to Hear: Identifying Religious Experience in Pastoral Spiritual Guidance, 297.
[20] Ibid., 297.

situation. However, the use of the M Scale in this way proved to be inadequate because the respondents reported that it was too difficult to quantify their responses using the ordinal scale in Hood's measure. It was suggested that the choice of 'yes, I have encountered this' or 'no, I have not encountered this' was more appropriate. I asked if the question should be retained. The participants in the pilot study observed that thinking about their listening experience in relation to the scale was a positive exercise. Therefore, the question was retained and modified.

Instead of administering the full questionnaire, a selection of questions was made. One question was taken from each of Hood's eight categories. The answers which were recorded on this questionnaire were matched against those gained by Hood's questionnaire. The presence of each element was considered in the interviewees' personal experiences and in their listening situation using a nominal scale of 'No, Yes'. To simplify the analysis, neutral answers on Hood's questionnaire were interpreted as 'No'. Four patterns of reply were possible: 'Yes-Yes' (Yes, I've had this experience and yes, I've heard this experience related); 'No-No' (No, I have not had this experience and no, I have not heard this experience related); 'Yes-No' (Yes, I've had this experience and no, I have not heard it related); and 'No-Yes' (No, I have not had this experience and yes, I've heard it related).

A range of situations was evident in the reports of the types of experiences encountered in the listening situation. Both spiritual directors and therapists heard narratives that contained types of phenomena with which they were unfamiliar as well as narratives containing familiar experiences. The congruence between personal experience and the reports of the phenomena related to the questions are found in Table 5.8.

Congruence with the listening situation could be both positive and negative: that is, it could include both the 'Yes-Yes' and 'No-No' type of situations. Taking both of these into account, the general agreement between the personal experience and reported experience was 67.9 %. Two other situations were also evident in the listening situation. In the first, the spiritual directors or therapists have had an experience that has not yet arisen in practice. I call this the 'Yes-No' situation. Second, the spiritual directors or therapists hear about phenomena that they have not experienced. I call this the 'No-Yes' situation. In this sample, the 'Yes-No' situation was 16.4 % and the 'No-Yes', 15.7 %. It could be postulated that both of these

circumstances are linked with the number of years of practice. For example, if this is the case, then it could by hypothesised that with an increasing number of years of experience, the number of 'Yes-No' responses would decrease because the person would hear more reports that coincided with his or her personal experience. Similarly, it could be hypothesised that the number of 'No-Yes' responses would decrease, if over time, a person's experience increased.

A Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient Test with corrections for ties was computed for Work Experience (Years) and for the 'Yes-No' responses and for the 'No-Yes' responses. In this sample, the number of years of work was significant in both situations. With an increase in time, the 'Yes-No' responses decreased. This indicates an increasing overlap between personal experience and narrative accounts. There was a negative correlation between experience and the 'No-Yes' situations. As working experience increased, the 'No-Yes' responses decreased. This suggests that personal experience increased with time and therefore that there were fewer unfamiliar phenomena in the narratives of others.

Listening Response

The last question in Part Two of the survey explored the response of the interviewees to mystical elements when they emerged in narratives.

10. How do you respond if experiences such as those in the last question are reported?

The purpose of this question was to probe the affective, cognitive, and behavioural reactions of the interviewees to reports of mystical experience. The responses were read using the reading guide found in Table 5.9.

How a spiritual director or therapist responds to accounts relating to the mystical that arise in the narrative situation may indirectly influence the stories that are told. For instance, a person who is uncomfortable or denies the possibility of mystical phenomena may react in such a manner that the storyteller learns not to speak about these kinds of things because the listener 'doesn't understand'. Therefore, question 10 explored how the interviewees perceived their responses to mystical elements arising in the narratives of others. These responses were coded and are found in Table 5.10. Ten interviewees reported that they felt comfortable

with mystical phenomena when reports of such phenomena arose in spiritual direction. However, one interviewee was quite frank and said 'part of me wants to say, "Panic"'. The remainder of the interviewees expressed mixed feelings.

If mystical elements arose within the narrative situation only five of the interviewees considered that they might be useful to the growth and development of the person concerned. Most people indicated that they thought such phenomena superfluous.

All of the interviewees indicated that they would try to listen reflectively. Qualities such as being non-judgemental and objective were considered important. All the interviewees stressed the necessity of placing mystical experiences within the social context of the person concerned. Less than one quarter mentioned stages of life, prayer or God. Figure 5.8 illustrates where the emphasis was placed in the listening process. Only two specific references to Christianity were made: one person suggested looking at mystical phenomena through the stories in the Gospel and another associated authenticity of the experiences with the fruits of the Spirit in a person's life.

5.3.3 Part C: The Model of the 'Landscape of the Soul'

After a verbal introduction to the model of the 'landscape of the soul', the spiritual directors were given an opportunity to comment on its personal usefulness and its relevancy to their working situation.[21]

11. Is such a model useful to you in understanding Christian mysticism?
12. Does this model reflect your experience in listening to the narratives of others?
13. In what way would you change or adapt the model?
14. Do you have any other comments?

A free and open discussion of the model was encouraged and sometimes this part of the interview lasted up to an hour as the pros and cons of the model were explored with reference to personal life as well as to the listening situation. At the end of the interview, when asked if they had any further comments, twelve of the respondents indicated that they would like to read more about the model.

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[21] The introduction to the model was read from a script. Diagrams were used illustrate the model.

Population Variables and the Usefulness of the Model

The overall usefulness of the model was calculated from the answers given in questions 11 and 12. The statements fell into five categories: No, No But, Neutral, Yes But and Yes.[22] For the people in the 'No' category, the model did not resonate either with their personal or working experience. In the 'No but' classification, the interviewees did not find the model either personally or practically useful, but they identified people or situations where the model might be applicable. Therefore, in their estimation, the model did have potential, albeit limited, value. The neutral section included replies in which a clear response was not made. The 'Yes but' category included those people who found the model personally and/or practically useful but at the same time criticised certain aspects or suggested modifications. The 'Yes' category contained those responses which affirmed the model without any critique being given. The results are illustrated in Table 5.11 and in Figure 5.10.

Overall, 80 % of the interviewees found the model relevant. The largest group of interviewees fell into the 'Yes But' category. The responses ranged from those which expressed interest – 'It's interesting to see the different aspects laid out in relationship to each other. It gives a sense of context, dynamics etc.' – to affirmation - 'It's a good model'. All the respondents in this group provided some sort of criticism indicating where they perceived a misfit between the model and their personal experience or working reality.

In evaluating the usefulness of the model of the 'landscape of the soul', there was a range of responses. These results raise the question of whether there is a relationship between the different population variables and the ratings of usefulness. Therefore, two additional examinations were made. The first used the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Test to look at age, working experience and the Hood's M Scale score and the second employed the Fisher Exact Test for 2 x 2 Tables to probe the different population groupings. Both of these tests are non-parametric and were used because Hood's M Score and the usefulness rating are ordinal values.

The first group of population variables which were examined included age,

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[22] In the analysis, these classifications were given the following values: 'No' = -2; 'No But' = -1; 'Neutral' = 0; 'Yes But' = +1; and 'Yes' = +2. For the overall usefulness, these values were combined. (See Table 5.11.)

the years of working experience and Hood's M Score. The statistical test used was the Spearman Rank-Order Coefficient.[23] The population variables, the null hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis, r_s, and the respective decisions are summarised in Table 5.12. The null hypothesis postulates that there will be no relationship between the particular variable (age, years of experience or the Hood's M Score) and the perceived usefulness of the landscape model. With the alternative hypothesis, a relationship is suggested. For example, it might be postulated that a younger person, a less experienced person, or a person who obtained a high score on the M Scale might find the model more useful. In the correlations that were tested, the null hypothesis could not be rejected for any of the variables tested. This means that in relation to this particular sample, it would appear that the relevancy of the model for the spiritual directors and therapists is a personal matter, which is independent of the person's age, working experience or personal experience of mysticism as measured by Hood's M Scale. Although not statistically valid, there was a slight negative correlation between the number of years of experience and the evaluation of the model. This could suggest that the model might be more useful for those who are beginning to act as spiritual directors.

The second set of relationships investigated pertained to the different groupings of the population. In these tests the values for the usefulness of the model were allocated to either a 'no' or 'yes' category. Therefore, the Chi-square test was used because it is suitable for nominal data. The groups which were examined included male/female, spiritual director/therapist and lay/ordained. The results are shown in Table 5.13. In each of the Chi-square tests, there were cells with the expected counts were less than 5. Therefore, the results were cross-checked using the Fisher Exact test for 2 x 2 tables.[24]

From the results obtained in the Chi-square and Fisher Exact tests, it could be seen that for this population sample there were no significant differences between

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[23] The correlation for the Hood's M Scale and Usefulness was also calculated using the Siegel and Fagan correction for ties. The uncorrected score was inflated by a value of 0.01. Because difference in the value of the correlation was small and this example had the most ties in the 'A' variable, a straight Spearman Rank-Ordered Correlation test was accepted for the variables of age and years of working experience.

[24] Sidney Siegel and N John Castellan Jr, 1988, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences, London: McGraw-Hill International Editions, 103-111.

the two groups in each pair and their assessment of the model. Therefore, as with the population variables of age, work experience and Hood's M Scale score, it can be said that for this population the evaluation of the model appears to subjective rather than linked to a particular group orientation such as lay vs. ordained or therapist vs. spiritual director.

5.4 Discussion of the Results of the Interviews

The discussion of the survey follows the triparite structure of the survey. In parts one and two, the question that I am addressing concerns the different understandings and experiences of the mystical that are held by this group of spiritual directors and therapists. Through the examination of these survey results, I seek to substantiate my claim that a variety of understandings concerning what is mystical can inform spiritual direction or a listening situation where elements associated with the mystical emerge in the narrative of the person telling his or her story. In the third part of the discussion, I examine the potential usefulness of the model as a framework in which these different understandings can be situated.

5.4.1 Part One: Understanding and Belief about Mysticism

Although it can be postulated that the model of the 'landscape of the soul' can provide a framework in which some different types of understandings related to the mystical can be situated, it could be asked whether the situation in spiritual direction warrants such a framework. I have claimed that a variety of understandings about mysticism can be found in spiritual direction and hence such a framework might be useful. To assess the situation in praxis, the first part of the survey explored the respondents' understanding and experience of mysticism.

Belief About Ultimate Reality

The first request in the interview was Please reflect for a moment and then in one or two short sentences state your most deeply held belief about ultimate reality. The purpose of this question was to investigate some of the beliefs of the spiritual directors or therapists that might underlie their listening situations.

The worldview that people consciously or unconsciously adopt may influence their perception of events as well as their interpretation of these events. For example, Daniel Helminiak defines his approach as a philosophical humanistic

psychology.[25] From this perspective, Helminiak brackets out the active presence of God in his model of psycho-spiritual development. The relationship between experience and belief is not necessarily linear as each may inform the other.[26] I assumed, in this survey, that a person's beliefs would affect their own experience as well as their experience in listening to the narratives of others. Hence, a person's belief system might influence whether or not he or she is receptive to those narratives with references to the mystical and how he or she might respond to such narratives. By beginning with this question, I hoped to establish the background belief against which subsequent replies could be seen.

Leaving out one response, all those interviewed described ultimate reality as benign. The exception was a neutral claim that 'I do not know what ultimate reality is'. The descriptions were framed using theistic language such as 'God is love' or 'a God who creates and redeems' as well as non-theistic language such as in the conception of ultimate reality as 'wholeness' or like 'golden thread'.

Although generally benign, in some of the responses the implication of a negative force could be discerned. For example, one person responded: 'as designer, creator and potential guide – potential, since the control is by invitation, love, encouragement and drawing towards – not by brute force'. Another of the people interviewed echoed the theme of power, in that ultimate reality is 'He, she, it – personhood – who is the ultimate cause of all that is and he who is power but not naked power'. Therefore, although ultimate reality was considered benevolent, this belief was not necessarily straightforward or simplistic. Over half of the respondents described ultimate reality in terms of 'God'.[27] Moreover, a relational element was indicated in most of these reports. For example:

> As persons, we are interdependent: we cannot survive without relationships and the most significant relationships are with God and our significant others.
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> God is love. Human beings share in the being of God, which is love, and that all creation indeed shares that being and this gives us both relationship with God and with each other. It also gives us the means for carrying out that relationship, i.e. God himself or herself.

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[25] Daniel A Helminiak, *Spiritual Development*, xii.
[26] Ibid., 18.
[27] A 'God' was referred to 13 times.

> That God is love, and therefore ultimate reality is all about right relationships.
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> There is a unifying, divine, presence/intelligence who spans the universe as designer, creator and potential guide - potential since the control is by invitation, love, encouragement and drawing towards - not by brute force. That ultimate power and reality we short-hand as 'God'. The paradox is that we as individuals can relate to this ultimate reality as if to one another.

Such descriptions of ultimate reality show a resonance with the conclusion that Alister Hardy drew from the reports sent to the Religious Experience Research Unit. Hardy suggested that a feeling for a transcendental reality is a characteristic of humankind and that there is a tendency to personalise this feeling into an I-Thou relationship.[28] Nevertheless, a small group of those were interviewed depicted a non-theistic understanding of ultimate reality, for example: 'The universe is on our side so the last word is love and forgiveness'.

The perception of the role of human interaction with ultimate reality was variable. Responses generally contained passive elements as well as those involving human choice and action. People could be described in terms of passive recipients of a 'gift'. In contrast, people were portrayed taking an active role such as in making choices, meeting God, searching or journeying. God was described as 'drawing, welcoming, yearning for a response from us'. This statement of belief highlights the importance of the open invitation to a relationship that seemed to underlie many of the responses.

Ultimate reality could be defined in a universal way and as something applicable to all. Alternatively, a particular religion could be indicated and a personal allegiance stated. In this survey, two respondents described ultimate reality in specifically Christian terms.

The belief about ultimate reality was considered important because it is assumed that the beliefs which directors bring to the pastoral situation will influence what they hear and how they interpret the spiritual narrative. One informant, who was both ordained and a psychotherapist, made this observation:

> Maybe the first thing that I should say is that a lot of reported experience for me happened at a time when I wasn't really in an active church

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[28] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 131, 134-136.

> relationship which would have made a difference to the way that I have acknowledged it. That's to say that I went through a period of about 20 years, I suppose my middle adult life, where I didn't espouse an overtly and explicitly religious Christian viewpoint. So I think that I would have put it through a secular filter during that time. I don't think that I was denying spiritual reality in other people. I simply wasn't practising it and self-aware and giving it a priority in a way that I would be now. It was a time when it was dismissed, as it were, as something significant in myself and therefore I think that I would have been very much the psychoanalyst and psychotherapist.

As this person acknowledges, personal beliefs do influence the interpretation that is given to reports associated with mystical experiences. During one period of this person's life, psychotherapy provided a 'secular filter' and informed the actions of listening, interpreting and responding. Although beliefs, as such, will be particular to each person, in this sample group, ultimate reality was generally conceived as benign. In addition, it was frequently described theistically with human interaction balanced between assertiveness and passivity. Finally, as in the dogma-free mysticism described by Robert Gimello, the majority of spiritual directors viewed ultimate reality from a universal position.[29]

In the model, spiritual life can be considered as a landscape system. How ultimate reality is conceived will influence how each of the parameters of the system is interpreted. For example, if ultimate reality is considered as a personal God then it might be conjectured that the input is the love of God, the change, a relationship with God through which a person is transformed by love and the output, a union of love that reflects the dynamics of a personal relationship. In the survey, the majority of the respondents viewed ultimate reality as a God with whom it was possible to have some sort of relationship. Thus, there is some evidence to suggest the inter-relational interpretation of the landscape system depicted in the model. In elaborating and constructing the model, I moved from a general representation of spiritual life to a thematic mapping of mysticism. Similarly, in the survey, I moved from a general understanding of ultimate reality to a specific examination of the understanding and experience of the mystical in the lives of those interviewed.

The Meaning of the word 'Mysticism'

In Chapter 3, I drew attention to three general ways in which mysticism can

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[29] Robert M Gimello, 1983, Mysticism in Its Contexts, in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, 86.

be understood: as an experience; as a stage in a developmental process; and as a relationship. It could be asked if the responses of the spiritual directors and therapists were consonant with these ways of interpreting mysticism. Two general observations can be made. First, all the spiritual directors and therapists interviewed related mysticism to a distinct type of subjective experience, to a relational experience or to a combination of both.[30] Second, none of the spiritual directors described their understanding of mysticism in terms of stages of prayer or spiritual growth. Therefore, in the terminology of the landscape system, within this group of people the geology of experiencing is the most prominent network, along with the ecology of relating.

Four of those interviewed said that they did not often use the word mysticism. The reasons varied – ineffability, lack of understanding, and the trouble with the definition of terms. First, two informants attributed the lack of use of the word mysticism to ineffability:

> You know, it's funny because it's a word I hardly ever use. And you know, I think it is because mysticism, to me, is like almost the unspeakable – it's like beyond words. So therefore it is hard to put into words but I'd say mysticism comes directly from God. Anything that relates directly to God, I'd say is mystical.
>
> I don't use the word mysticism very much. But I do think of God and life as mystery. And I see that lots of things happen in the world that I know about in experience but find it hard to put into words. It's hard to describe the indescribable. It's something that I wonder at.

In both these examples, there is a suggestion of the unknown or inexplicable. In the first example, mysticism is related to immediacy, that which 'comes directly from God' but what this is or how it is to be described is 'beyond words' and hence 'unspeakable'. Similarly, in the second example, mysticism is associated with the mystery of God and life. However, although this mystery is recognised, it cannot be elucidated.

The second reason given for not using the word mysticism is a lack of understanding:

> I'm not sure what I mean by it. It's not a word that I would normally use, I

[30] Two of the responses were difficult to analyse. However, seen in conjunction with personal and work experiences, it could be seen that they did refer to experience – one, the experience of hearing of the voice of God and the other, the experience of the revelation of truth.

> don't think. What pops into my head are the great saints like Teresa of Avila, etc. And the kind of experiences which they had which would be defined as mysticism. I also think of Jung but it is not a word that I would normally use or attach to any spiritual experiences which I might have had.

Here, mysticism is connected with the saints and the person disclaims such experiences. Ninian Smart, in Reasons and Faiths, specifically associates mysticism with the saints and with those who are leading ascetic lives of prayer.[31] Likewise, W T Stace distinguishes between experiences which occur spontaneously and those which take place after long discipline.[32] Stace relates spontaneous, or untrained experiences, with extrovertive forms of mysticism. A person may experience a profound sense of reality and sacredness and the feelings of joy and peace. However, as long as there are sensory perceptions and an experience of a subject-object duality is maintained, Stace does not consider these types of experiences as a complete form of mysticism.[33]

Third, one informant made a distinction between the words mysticism and mystical:

> It's not a word that I use very much. I'm not sure whether it's because I consciously avoid it or whether it is because I think of it as rather an academic word. Mysticism is writing and thinking about mystical experience. And I suppose if I had to choose a term I would prefer to talk about the mystical. By the mystical, I would mean people's direct experience of God.

Three other spiritual directors used the word mysticism in the sense that this person applied to the word mystical, that is, as indicative of a direct experience of God or ultimate reality. However, nine other responses indirectly alluded to such a direct experience. The form which this experience could take and the characteristics associated with the experience varied.

The output associated with the geology of experiencing was considered a type of altered state of consciousness. Some of the characteristics linked with mysticism by philosophers of religion and comparative religionists did emerge in the understanding of mysticism given by those interviewed. However, the precision and fine distinctions found in philosophical discourses were absent. Like William James' four characteristics, the descriptions were general and could possibly be applied to a

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[31] Ninian Smart, 1958, *Reasons and Faiths*, 55,71.
[32] W T Stace, 1960, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, 60.
[33] Ibid., 132.

variety of experiences. For example, William James attributed ineffability to mysticism. We have already seen that two of the informants did not use the word mysticism because for them, the mystical is inexpressible – 'beyond words' and 'indescribable'. The second characteristic that James linked with mysticism was a noetic quality that he defined as 'states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect'.[34] He goes on to say that these states are 'illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance...'.[35] One of the spiritual directors reported:

> I think that I would mean a sort of intouchness with a reality which isn't an objective, logical, evident reality which is, nevertheless, experienced and feels real and has some significance.

Similar to James, this person defined their understanding of mysticism in terms of a non-rational experience with a noetic quality, in this case a profound sense of reality. Although Ninian Smart separates the numinous and the mystical, numinous experiences continue to be linked with mysticism. For example:

> I think that it is something to do with tuning into that mystery of God, so it's being aware of the largeness of God. The word that springs to mind is awe and the picture of kneeling in adoration and awefulness.

Six of the spiritual directors linked mysticism with a non-rational experience containing a degree of numinosity, such as a sense of wonder or mystery and the 'bare encounter' with the 'unboundedness' of God.

However, the question could be asked whether mysticism always refers to a distinct type of experience that can be described by such characteristics as ineffability, a noetic quality, or numinosity. One person observed:

> I would say that a person was open to ultimate reality in a way that most people normally are not and that it would probably have a characteristic of occasion – only one possibly extremely important experience – and that it would be structured beyond thinking but not necessarily – a person could be a mystic without having that kind of experience.

A certain way of being, 'openness to ultimate reality', is suggested in this person's understanding of mysticism. This openness may be correlated with a vivid, non-rational experience. Similarly, another spiritual director said that mysticism is 'being

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[34] William James, 1928, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 380.
[35] Ibid., 380.

in touch with ultimate reality' and another claimed that it is '...being caught up in the life of God, caught up in communion with God'. With these understandings, there is a shift from a distinct phenomenological event to the sense of an activity.

An understanding that links the mystical with an encounter and relationship with God is another theme that was mapped in the 'landscape of the soul'. This raises the question of whether or not this understanding, the ecology of relating, is reiterated in the interviews with the spiritual directors and therapists. For one spiritual director, mysticism meant:

> A deep experience of the presence of God and which may be mediated in a number of ways. I mean, for example, it may come to be in the use of prayer, in music or in nature or in reading something in which we are more than usually aware of the presence of God or feel far more than usually close in touch with Him.

As was seen, according to early Christian understanding, the mystery of God can be encountered in scripture, through participation in the liturgy, or in the living of the baptismal life in which the fruits of the Spirit, faith, hope and love, are manifested. Similarly, in this person's description of mysticism, 'a deep experience of the presence of God' is conveyed through reading, prayer, music and nature.

Although there were references that could be connected with an ecology of relating, most of the responses in the survey reflected issues relating to the geology of experiencing. Moreover, these issues illustrated some of the contemporary debates surrounding mysticism. For example, philosophers of religion and comparative religionists, such as Ninian Smart and W T Stace, define mysticism strictly as a perceptionless experience. One of the respondents was clearly wrestling with the paradox of how an experience can be perceptionless and yet perceived:

> I think I mean an experience of God which is mediated through human senses as opposed to one, for example, being mediated through scripture or through the words of some other person. It's an unmediated experience but if it were I don't know what it would mean to be aware of it. But it seems to me to be mediated in a way that doesn't have human input of, for example, scripture or somebody talking to you.

Whereas for one spiritual director 'a deep experience of God's presence' could be mediated through prayer, music, nature and reading, for this person the 'experience of God' was direct and unmediated. Interestingly, although one person linked mysticism to communion with God, there were no references to understanding

mysticism as a unitive state without subject-object duality and devoid of sensory perceptions.

Just as there was a division in the understanding between spiritual directors and therapists concerning the mediation of experience, so too, other differences were evident. For example, one of the questions which has been debated in the twentieth century is whether there are one or many types of mysticism. The idea of a common core is implied in this response:

> I mean that the unknowable is somehow known as a felt experience. That the burden of the mystery, that there is a tremendous mystery and that is somehow the focus. What we are given to know of it is revealed but it is not the mystery as such. That somehow the paradox of facing the unknowable gives meaning and knowledge somehow linked with a spiritual understanding. I think that 'the cloud of unknowing' and the mystical side of all religions has more meaning than the structures of doctrine.

The paradox of the experience of the unknown and the reference to the fourteenth-century Christian treatise, The Cloud of Unknowing, suggest an apophatic understanding of mysticism. Furthermore, this is seen as present in all religions and as transcending religious doctrines. Such a position reflects 'the one great underground river' suggested by Matthew Fox.[36]

However, the constructionists such as Stephen Katz contend that there are many mysticisms contingent upon the context. One of the spiritual directors clearly sees several types of mysticism:

> The word mysticism for me does not necessarily carry any explicitly religious content. One has read or met people who have had some kind of awareness of immensity to which in different ways they relate, but which fills and transforms and I think usually there's a kind of moral element. I don't mean moral in the ten commandment sense. There is an awareness I suppose of what we would call, in religious terms, transcendent glory and then, of course, there is Christian mysticism, again. It involves an awareness of God and it depends on the kind of Christian you are, because we're each one of us drawn in different ways to different persons in the Trinity. There are people for whom the Father is central, as it were. We may say intellectually that in the Trinity there isn't any difference or inequality. Nevertheless, there are people who are drawn to the Father. There are Jesus people. There are also people who are Spirit people and for whom God is the ever present inspiring, guiding, correcting, strengthening presence. And for Christian mysticism then I think that God, in different degrees of emphasis of the persons of the Trinity, becomes vividly aware to the person who's experiencing and mysticism is either an

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[36] Matthew Fox, 1988, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 230.

> experiencing of the Christian – transcendent – or a hunger and a seeking and searching for either the transcendent God or the experience of the transcendent. And when I say that it is a seeking I have reservations in my mind because very often it comes unsought and when you hungrily seek the experience you may be seeking the experience and not the transcendent in itself. Very often an experience of mysticism is a grace that is given and comes unexpectedly, improbably, incredibly and it may be often vestigial, so that you look back and you wonder, 'Was it really true?' and 'Did I enter into this?' 'Was this relationship real?' And so, mysticism may be characterised by an overwhelming certainty or it may also be accompanied by a tentativeness, a wondering.

At the beginning of this response, there is a description of the numinous, the 'awareness of immensity' and 'transcendent glory'. What is important in this description of the meaning of mysticism is that the informant distinguishes different types of Christian mysticism according to the Persons of the Trinity. Those philosophers arguing for contextualisation classify mysticism according to religious belief such as Jewish mysticism, Christian mysticism, Islamic mysticism, Buddhist mysticism and so forth. However, this spiritual director observes differences that arise from within the belief system, itself, in this case from the relationship of individuals with the different Persons in the Trinity. In addition, the paradoxes of seeking God and God's free self-revelation and the certainty of the relationship and its tentative wonder are also depicted.

Another question which has occupied twentieth-century debates is whether mysticism is for an elite or for everyone. This is a relevant question in spiritual direction where our conceptions about mysticism may influence how we interpret the stories that are told. For example, if we consider mysticism to be for an elite who have particular types of experience, we may fail to recognise those who lives are lived in union with God, but who do not have particular experiences such as altered states of consciousness.[37] Moreover, our preconceptions may limit the activity of God, as in the denial of spiritual life in children.[38] Again, a split among the spiritual directors and therapists was evident. As we have already seen, some of the definitions of mysticism link it with special people who are capable of such experiences or with the saints such as Teresa of Avila. One person said:

> I use the word in its classical sense of the mystics. And it is the experience

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[37] See the stories of Petra and Claire in Ruth Burrows, 1976, *Guidelines for Mystical Prayer*.
[38] Daniel A Helminiak, *Spiritual Direction*, 37. For an exploration of the spiritual lives of children, see Robert Coles, 1990, *The Spiritual Life of Children*.

> which comes to us in their writings, poetry and sometimes in their art of a reality which most of us are not in touch with.

In other examples such as this, there appears to be a divide between normal people who are not in touch with ultimate reality or God in a particular experiential way and those special people who are. However, in contrast to the four spiritual directors who did make this distinction between an elite and the ordinary populace, the remaining spiritual directors and therapists were less categorical.

I have claimed that a syncretistic conception of mysticism can be found not only in popular literature but also in the thoughts of spiritual directors. I have suggested that contact with Eastern religions, the New Age movement and the new scientific paradigm can be influential in shaping a person's conception of what is mystical. However, in examining the conceptions of mysticism given by the spiritual directors who were interviewed, there were no direct references to these potential influences. Any bias, as for example the anti-institutional/dogma stance suggested by one of the spiritual directors, would be inferential and could not be substantiated without further questioning. Nevertheless, although all of the people interviewed linked their understanding of the mystical with subjective experiences, there was a mixing of different discourses such as that concerning the numinous and the mystical, as well as indications of different theological stances such as the elite-universal divide. However, our intellectual conceptions about the mystical may not be correlated with our actual perceptions of the mystical. Therefore, I followed up the different understandings given by the spiritual directors and therapists with a reflection upon their personal experience in their lives and in praxis.

Personal Experiences of Mysticism

Practical theology has been described as 'doing theology from below'.[39] Personal story-telling provides a way of accessing a person's understanding 'from below' because it draws upon personal experience which may bypass intellectual formulations. Thus, in the first part of the survey, two questions involving stories were used to approach the personal experiences of mysticism in the sample population. In addition, a questionnaire was also employed. The first question was intended as a follow-up to the theoretical definitions of mysticism. It requested a

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[39] Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, 1966, *Practical Theology in Action*, 80.

personal example of anything which stood out in the person's memory as mystical. The second question probed the more general on-going experience described by Beatrice Webb in the example used by Alister Hardy. The questionnaire explored a conception of the mystical that was limited to subjective types of experience.

Having defined their understanding of the word mysticism, when asked about their personal experiences the interviewees frequently gave more than one example. Although Daniel Helminiak limits spiritual life and mysticism to adulthood, many of the stories that were told were located in childhood or adolescence.[40] Six interviewees gave examples of mystical experiences from childhood and then supplemented their stories with further illustrations from adulthood. Similarly, four stories were from adolescence with additional examples from adulthood. The antecedents to the experiences were varied and included such things as prayer, reading, distress, nature, art and music. In two instances, the experiences were sudden and unexpected with no recognisable antecedent. Such experiences were acknowledged as a gift by several respondents.

The stories of mysticism, whether as a discrete event or as a sense of presence, tended to be described affectively and corresponded to many of the categories found in the classification of religious experience by Alister Hardy.[41] If Hardy's classification is used for analysis then under the category of visual sensory or quasi-sensory experience, there was one report of light, one of the feeling of 'unity-with-everything-that-is' and one 'out-of-body' experience. Auditory experiences included calming and guiding voices and also 'being spoken through' in the gift of tongues. Touch was described as a sense of warmth. There was one description of a pure consciousness event where an experience of timelessness, spacelessness and a loss of duality occurred and another experience of 'being taken out of myself'. This description of 'being taken out of oneself' is often used to depict ecstasy.[42] When these reports are located within the landscape model, they are concerned with different subjective experiences and hence form part of a geology of experiencing.

In some philosophical debates, following Ninian Smart, numinosity is

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[40] Daniel Helminiak, 1987, *Spiritual Development*, 77-79.
[41] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 25-29.
[42] Nelson Pike, 1992, *Mystic Union*, 26-28.

separated from the mystical. However in popular thought the numinous and the mystical are frequently linked. This was illustrated in four reports where elements associated with numinosity were described as mystical. In contrast, one spiritual director was aware of the distinction that is made between the numinous and the mystical:

> I would say that I have had numinous experiences where certainly I felt overwhelmed by something but not what I would call mystical. I am not sure whether I would separate the numinous from the mystical or whether I am saying that because I would deny that I could have a mystical experience because of the connotations of the mystical as being on some different level or plane of consciousness which is achieved through some special relationship with that which is beyond. Perhaps there have been glimpses of Ultimate Reality. I used to feel it when I listened to music when I was a teenager and at other times, it's usually through the senses, by seeing a vivid sunrise, by smelling or some experience of an external sensation.

In numinous experience, the majestas describes the overwhelming nature of the mysterium tremendum.[43] In this report there is a sense of being 'overwhelmed by something'. However, the person does not recognise a distinct altered state of consciousness and therefore does not identify the experience as mystical. Another interviewee also disclaimed having any mystical experiences because of the association of the mystical with such experiences as those of Teresa of Avila. However, like the previous spiritual director, this person went on to describe the numinous experience of awefulness.

In Christianity, Saul of Tarsus' encounter with the risen Christ in the blinding light on the road to Damascus provides an example of mystical conversion.[44] Two respondents linked the beginning of their religious life and experience of mysticism with a conversion experience in young adulthood. One said:

> I have had the experience in which you feel overwhelmed by God. Almost like an earthquake experience that has always been associated with a kind of conversion experience and the ending has always been one of feeling God's care for me and love. And things have never been the same again. You can never go back to what you were before and yet it's OK. And once it's over there is a tremendous feeling of peace.

The conversion experience, for both of the respondents, occurred in young adulthood whilst they were students. This time period is recognised as one of great physical

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[43] Rudolf Otto, 1958, *The Idea of the Holy*, 19-23.
[44] Bruno Borchert, 1994, *Mysticism*, York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 147.

and emotional turmoil during which the young person seeks to discover a sense of 'self' often through the experimentation with different life-styles.[45] Lewis R Rambo suggests that religious conversion is a multidimensional and complex process consisting of a series of stages.[46] It is likely that the early stages of crisis and quest, being the search for meaning and purpose, were present in the lives of the two informants at this time. Hence, they were receptive to their conversion experiences. As we have seen in the example of Clare of Assisi such experiences can lead into an ongoing process of God's call and human response, that is, to a geomorphology of growing.

Although the predominant focus in the replies was upon particular types of subjective experiences, a relational element was not entirely absent. Two spiritual directors reported the experience of the presence of Christ. At a very difficult time when one of the respondents felt that 'life wasn't worth living', Christ's presence was experienced:

> But just as I was thinking that, I was aware of a presence with me which I knew was Christ walking with me in that very sore place. It gave me the strength to go on ... There was a sense of awe but not really that. I think it was probably strength and comfort and that I was not alone. I was being accompanied.

According to Hardy, depression and despair are antecedents to a life-transforming religious experience for a large number of people.[47] However, another frequent antecedent he identifies is participation in religious worship.[48] It is in this context that the second report of Christ occurred. As one spiritual director celebrated the Easter Eucharist, there was an awareness of the presence of the risen Christ.

Within the landscape model, the landscape function associated with spiritual life was the transformation of a person's life through the love of God. One recurring theme in the stories about mystical experiences was the overwhelming sense of being loved:

> I had this very powerful sense of warmth of love, of being enfolded and a sense that Ultimate Reality was personal and the Ultimate Reality loved me. That

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[45] Ekik H Erikson, 1950/1963, *Childhood and Society*, London: Paladin Grafton Books, 234-236.
[46] Rambo presents a sequential stage model consisting of the stages of context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences. (Lewis R Rambo, 1993, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 17.)
[47] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 91-92.
[48] Ibid., 84.

> was a completely overwhelming experience and I actually could not speak for days after. I was completely shattered.
>
> About 19 or 20, I was listening to a lecture that was in some ways essentially boring. It was about religion and in a dusty lecture room and there was a shaft of sunlight coming down from a very high window and I was just overwhelmed by the conviction that I was loved by God.

In addition to being loved, there were descriptions of joy ('just being swamped by a feeling of absolute, just joy'), peace, security and affirmation. These types of affective experiences are also found in the reports sent to the Religious Experience Research Centre.[49]

Seven of the stories that were related by the spiritual directors involved nature. They included descriptions such as:

> I was a teenager about 16 or 17, out in the country, taking the dog for a walk. I was lying down and waiting and suddenly I was aware of being a part of creation and of being loving toward creation. It was exciting and I was exhilarated.
>
> I remember it as being half dark and there was this large bowl of daffodils and the daffodils wouldn't have been there if it was at night because all flowers were always taken out of the ward but what matters is that I remember turning around and looking at these daffodils and they were more real than anything else there. They were archetypal daffodils and I remember being absolutely transfixed looking at these flowers which had become – I actually don't have any words to describe it. I just remember feeling a sort of amazing feeling of joy and just being transfixed, just looking at these flowers which had suddenly assumed this kind of immensity. And I just never have forgotten that. It was like receiving a gift that you just don't know what to do with.

One spiritual director identified two distinct types of mystical experiences. The first type was likened to the 'sorts of things that Gerald Manley Hopkins explores in his poems, like God's grandeur – the sense of glory in the natural world'.[50] The second type was the experience of feeling a 'part of a greater universe and being awe struck'. Two people described the scent of flowers acting as trigger for an experience of God.

In early Christianity, the mystical life was considered as a foretaste of

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[49] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 51-67.

[50] The second type of experience described the experience of 'the penny dropping or making the connection...of being valued or affirmed and of being called upon and being in relationship with God'.

paradise and concomitant with this was human friendship with animals.[51] One of the spiritual directors linked an experience of the mystical with an animal:

> Two years earlier ... on Iona, I was just continually aware of the reality and the presence of God in that island but it was an experience, in a way mystical but not strikingly mystical, it was an experience which came to me most powerfully through an animal, a horse ... and with whom I established quite an extraordinary friendship ... and he trod on my foot and I have never experienced up to that point any animal which said 'Whoops, sorry,' but it was. You might think that, in view of what I said about the previous meaning of the word mysticism, I would not use that word about this but it did give me the feeling that the whole world, everything, is of God and that the whole creation is.[52]

Another person associated mystical experience with the experience of fatherhood where there is a fleeting insight into 'what it is to be a co-creator and to have the object of your creation entrusted to you in all its fragility and all its promise'.

As mentioned above, Hood's questionnaire was included to provide a measure with which to compare the evaluation of the model and two observations were made. First, the scores of the interviewees were considerably lower than those obtained by Hood and also by Caird. Second, every person objected to the wording of the questions. One of the major criticisms was the use of double negatives. Many of the correspondents found these confusing and on two occasions, after completing the scale, the interviewees realised that they had answered incorrectly.

A second complaint was the inaccuracy of the language. For instance, in response to the last statement on the Hood's M scale which reads 'I have had an experience that cannot be expressed in words', one person commented:

> The statement should read 'cannot be described adequately'. We would not know about anyone's experiences at all if they could not absolutely be expressed in words. That's really sawing off the branch that you are sitting on, isn't it?

This observation reflects the paradox of expressing the inexpressible. Although it is claimed that mystical experiences are ineffable, such experiences are often

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[51] Roger D Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature: Tradition and Innovation in Western Christian Attitudes Toward the Environment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 16-21; Ester de Waal, 1995, Introduction, in *Beasts and Saints*, Helen Waddell, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, xxv.

[52] This person's understanding of mysticism was: 'I use the word in its classical sense of the mystics. And it is the experience which comes to us in their writings, poetry and sometimes in their art of a reality which most of us are not in touch with'.

beautifully and copiously described in the writings of mystics. The person who was interviewed observed, it would be more accurate to say, 'I have had an experience that cannot be adequately expressed in words'.

Other words and phrases were questioned, which further highlighted the difficulty of talking about the subject of mysticism. Several people wanted to make modifications to the language. For instance, one person preferred 'transformed reality' to 'new reality' and another objected to the word 'absorbed'. Four interviewees queried the questions relating to time and space. One person wanted to know the difference between 'timeless and spaceless' and 'no sense of time and space'. All of these interviewees commented that they had had one of these experiences but not both together at the same time, and therefore their experience was not adequately represented. Finally, one person objected to the use of the word 'experience' because it seemed to imply a discrete event. This person said, 'I would not like to pin it down to an experience. It is more like an ongoing sense'. This observation brings us to another type of experience of what was considered mystical by the spiritual directors and therapists.

In his general introduction to The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism, Bernard McGinn suggests that the 'term "presence" [is] a more central and more useful category for grasping the unifying note in the varieties of Christian mysticism'.[53] When asked to describe a personal experience that was considered mystical, one person replied, 'I don't think that I have had that in terms of specific events. It's more a low key sense of something ongoing. I don't think that I could pinpoint specific events'. The second question, which probed personal experience, was aimed at an exploration of the sense of presence.

Phenomenologically, a continuing sense of presence was described in various ways. One person said that it was like a 'sunrise inside' or like 'smiling inside'. Other sensory elements associated with a sense of God's presence included light, warmth and buoyancy. One person portrayed a sense of unity with God:

> I think of it as a divine presence. It's very pragmatic. It's a very practical, real thing for me. I feel intertwined with God. That's the best way of saying it. I feel God's presence in me and my presence in God. It's like I don't feel the loss of my personal sense of self particularly. It's that, I feel an ongoing

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[53] Bernard McGinn, 1991, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, xvii.

> presence and I experience it as a sense of protection, a sense of friendliness. But it's more than human; it's like a being presence. And in the course of my day, I have a lot of ongoing dialogue with God. A lot of it takes the form of gratitude on my part for many things. I try to have periods of meditation and quiet and giving over into the stillness. But that's not what I mean as much as, as I go about my day, I feel this presence ... I drive a lot and if I make any kind of drive, I always say a prayer and ask for help and safety and I feel as though there is nothing between me and God and I can just say it and I feel that it's received immediately.

In this report, the spiritual director describes being united to God, of being 'intertwined'. However, the sense of subject-object remains. According to R C Zaehner's typology, this would be an example of theistic mysticism, which W T Stace argues is an incomplete form of mysticism because of the presence of a subject-object duality. This experience is, in the words of the informant, 'pragmatic'. In the seventh mansion of the Interior Castle, Teresa of Avila describes the spiritual marriage. One of the characteristics of union, in this stage of prayer, is that a person is able to remain united to God in the midst of worldly activity and there is an abiding peace.[54] There is an indication in this spiritual director's pragmatism of a sense of union.

In seven of the stories related, there were perceptions that paralleled the observations by Bernard Lonergan in Method in Theology where he compared God's love to 'background music'.[55] Three of the spiritual directors observed that a sense of God's presence was not extraordinary. One person said:

> Yes, I have a continuing sense of presence but how would I describe it? Well, I think it's like I said before – a sense of closeness and yet something mysterious that I can't understand. But yet there is a sense of awareness. I find it easier to be aware of when I try to deny it. When I say, 'I don't believe in God', I find that impossible to say. So it's a sense not so much of what I experience but it's somehow there in the background.

For this spiritual director, God's presence was continuous. However, it could more easily be seen against the background of the impossibility of denial. For another spiritual director, whose experience was 'knowing by not knowing', God's presence was also perceived through denial. However, the context of this denial was not personal but in those social or religious scenes where God's dynamic presence was not recognised. Another person reported that the presence of God was found in the

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[54] Teresa of Avila, 1946, *Mansions*, in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, 7.1.10; 7.2.6-10.
[55] Bernard Lonergan, 1971, *Method in Theology*, 290.

activities of everyday life.

Bernard Lonergan suggests that 'being-in-love' with God creates a new horizon. One spiritual director described the sense of presence in relation to the boundaries that people create around themselves in life. This person's boundaries were not clearly defined, that is, a distinction between sacred and secular could not be made. Consequently, this person experienced an 'at homeness' with the presence of God in the whole of life.

If God's presence is always in the background, then the question arises of how the presence of God pervades conscious human awareness. In the thematic exploration of the model, I suggested that the geomorphology of growing could be associated with the deepening and honing of attention to God. The role of attention was highlighted by one of the respondents:

> There was a period...that I became aware in various ways of the work of the Holy Spirit in a much more real way than I had previously, which left me with a very deep and profound sense of the reality of God. And that is how I would express it: that it is a sense of a reality of God. Because before that I think that I tended to think that God was certainly there but the word 'real' didn't really apply. As a result of certain experiences I had, and certain feelings that I was left with, I definitely felt that not only was God real and that was the first and very important point to get to, but that God was more real than the things that I kept tripping over in the world. Actually, it was the first step that was more important than the second one, curiously, because once I got God on the scale of reality and then, if you are going to have a God and God will be at the top but up to that point I tended to keep God off the scale of reality ... Before that intellectually, I had tended to think of God as being a bit like the form of Good in Plato. The form of the Good in Plato, you see and recognise and it does not require any explanation but provides the basic premise for everything else that happens and I tended to think of God in that sort of way. But the problem of thinking of God in that sort of way is that it tends to be very cerebral. But then God came to me to seem like actually Aristotelian in that when Aristotle is talking about ethics, he talks about something called practical syllogism which is always difficult for us to explain whereby you have a major premise and a minor premise which applies to the major premise. And what follows is not a statement but an action – in a way, being able to see the reality of God turned into being an active proposition, in as much as, God was not only the Goodness of God, not only part of an ethical theory, but actually empowering. It's the activity of the thing. It was just that I knew that God was active. There are times when my sense of that flags and there are times it has been remarkably continuous. Attention is the way I would describe it, that is, attending. That prayer is always attending to the reality of God and that can be done in different ways.

First, in this description of a continuing sense of presence, there is a transformation

of the person's horizon so that God is seen as active rather than as an intellectual proposition. Cognitively, the spiritual director knew God in a new way. In the stories that were told, three other people noticed that a continuing sense of presence arose when the 'head thing was translated into permanent understanding'.

However, as observed above, this transformation does not automatically engage conscious awareness. Rather, to be aware of the presence of God, attention is required. Four of the spiritual directors observed that the sense of the presence of God is intermittent and dependent upon their attention. One spiritual director observed that human attention to the presence of God could be trained and fostered. Another person commented, 'If I am driving along the motorway at 70 mph, I don't want to be aware of God. I want to be aware of the other cars'. Thus, focus upon God may necessarily be in the background of a person's life when other activities demand attention. Nevertheless, as the respondent said above, 'attending to the reality of God...can be done in different ways'.

In the landscape model, corridors provide means of communication through which God can address humankind. Prayer and the reading of scripture were identified as antecedents to distinct mystical experiences as well as important in maintaining the sense of presence. According to Teresa of Avila, it is through prayer and meditation that a person enters the Interior Castle where there are many rooms.[56] One of the spiritual directors likened prayer to an 'experiment in reality', and:

> One's mystical life is made up of hundreds and thousands of those experiments in reality gradually building up a picture and affirming a view one has of Otherness or Ultimate Reality.

Thus, returning to Teresa's image, as a person explores the rooms in the Interior Castle, a relationship with God is gradually being developed, or in the words of this spiritual director, 'building up a picture ... one has of Otherness or Ultimate Reality'. Similarly, God's self-revelation is manifested through scripture:

> God was interacting with me and I could talk with Him, as I can talk to you, and He would answer me, not in the way you answer me but that I would know what he was saying to me ... something would come in the scripture passage that I was reading and in meditations about scriptural passages, He would speak to me, He would talk to me.
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> Prayer is ultimately giving time listening to God ... for God to speak to you or

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[56] Teresa of Avila, 1946, *Interior Castle*, in *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, 1.2.8.

> you to speak to God. I experience that in different ways mainly through using the office and through the office, in the reading. And I experience a reality about God through the psalms, which I then go and ponder and perhaps take with me through the day.[57]

Another spiritual director also referred to the psalms as a mean of continual contact with the sense of God's presence. In addition, times of retreat provide a space for intense prayer and meditation on scripture where it is possible to be more attentive to the presence of God. Four spiritual directors located their clearest sense of presence during and after such times.

Consistency

Consistency in the answers to the open questions was examined. In this thesis I make the assumption that spiritual life can be examined from the perspective of systems thinking. If this is a valid assumption, then many factors such as social and cultural conditions and theological and philosophical prejudices will influence spiritual life and, by association, a person's understanding of and experience of the mystical. Hence, the questions related to consistency explored whether any discernible connections could be made between a person's conception of ultimate reality, their understanding of the construct mysticism and their personal experiences.

One of the questions that could be asked is whether what a person believed about ultimate reality influenced his or her conception of mysticism. Of all the descriptions of ultimate reality, thirteen were theistically orientated and of these, eleven contained relational elements in their understanding of mysticism. Words and phrases such as 'communion', 'close in touch', 'encounter' and 'being in touch' were considered relational. Similarly, words or phrases suggesting communication were also identified as relational as in those examples where a person speaks to God and God responds.

Another issue that was explored was theistic belief and the emergence of relational elements in a person's story. Almost all those who considered ultimate reality as theistic told stories that contained a relational dimension in their isolated experiences, in their feeling of a sense of presence, or in both. There was one exception. One spiritual director stated that 'I would give the name God to ultimate

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[57] The person in this excerpt is referring to the monastic office, which consists of a series hymns, psalms and prayers set for particular times of each day throughout the liturgical year.

reality and that ultimate reality is, at the rock bottom, loving'. However, this person's understanding of mysticism was formulated in non-theistic terms and the experiences that were related were non-personal and linked with nature mysticism – 'being aware of being a part of, one with, creation'. Hence, for this person intellectual understanding was not necessarily related to personal experience. This example is important because it suggests the possibility of a similar split occurring in praxis between intellectual understanding and personal experience.

It could also be asked if non-theistic belief was correlated with non-theistic personal experiences such as Ninian Smart's timelessness, spacelessness and perceptionlessness. Of the six of the spiritual directors or therapists who described ultimate reality in non-theistic terms, only two maintained a clear non-theistic and non-relational perspective throughout the questioning. By non-relational, I mean that there was no indication of intentional interaction. John Macmurray observes that 'What merely happens we refer to another happening which we call its cause. Actions are the realization of intentions; events the effects of causes'.[58] For example, one spiritual director defined ultimate reality as 'Some sort of wholeness. I can't think of any words.' This person's concept of mysticism was 'An experience of reality which is beyond reality – beyond conscious reality'. In these terse statements, there is no indication that the person is more than a passive recipient of an event. This spiritual director's personal descriptions were non-personal experiences, relating to nature mysticism and devoid of any indication of interactive elements.

If it is assumed that a relationship consists of the dynamic interaction between two agents, in the terminology of Macmurray, then it is possible to conceive that both active and passive elements, such as giving and receiving, will be present. In twelve of the descriptions of ultimate reality there were indications of intentional activity. For example, phrases such as 'we as individuals can relate to this ultimate reality as if to one another' or 'we live subject to time and need to make choices' occurred in some of the responses. Although a sense of intentional interaction was maintained in most of the subsequent narratives, three respondents did not recall experiences consistent with their understanding of ultimate reality. In other words, where relational experiences might have been expected, non-relational examples were

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[58] John Macmurray, 1961, *Persons in Relation*, 221.

given. However, in all of these cases instances of an overwhelming experience of nature was reported.

The responses given in the first part of the survey demonstrate that the understanding and identification of the mystical is complex. An overall consistency was showed by eight interviewees. Although tendencies such as the association of theism with a relational understanding of mysticism could be discerned, the internal inconsistencies revealed that, for this group of spiritual directors and therapists, their understanding and associations with the word 'mysticism' were generally a nebulous mix of ideas that were not necessarily consistent. Therefore, from these reports, there is evidence to support the hypothesis that syncretistic understandings of mysticism can be brought into spiritual direction. Thus, there is a basis for the conjecture that a model of spiritual life that allows us to situate these understandings might be useful. However, before addressing the usefulness of the model, I will look at how the spiritual directors and therapists responded to reports of the mystical that occur in the narratives of others.

5.4.2 Part B: The Working Situation

The sample population was diverse with spiritual directors and therapists, lay and ordained persons. Thus, several combinations of roles were possible. Generally, spiritual direction is a less intensive practice than the therapeutic situation: that is, a spiritual director is likely to see a few people spread over a long period of time. It was observed that the exception to this pattern occurs during times of retreat when a spiritual director may see several people intensely over a short period of time.

Hood's M Scale provided parameters with which to compare personal experience with the reports of similar types of experience occurring in listening situations. It has been suggested that personal openness to and experience of the mystical will influence what is heard. From the data, we can see that there was a greater likelihood that the experiences of others would be recognised when the spiritual director or therapist could draw upon personal experience. Similarly, with increase in experience, there was a parallel increase in the identification of the mystical in the stories of others.

If mystical elements arose within the narrative situation only five people considered that they might be useful to the growth and development of the person

concerned. Most of the spiritual directors or therapists indicated that they thought such phenomena superfluous. One person said:

> My hesitation is that I don't think that they are necessary for spiritual growth and development and that they can actually happen at any point of spiritual growth. So they are not the eighth castle or whatever St Teresa talked about. But in fact you may be a beginner and you can be caught up in mystic experience. I don't think that it can be a sign about how far along the journey you are.

Another person highlighted the danger of such experiences: 'And there can be a game of more-mystical-than-thou – looking for mystical events rather than God.' This observation supports claim that it is possible for a person to become focused on particular types of experiences and thereby, lose sight of God.

All of the interviewees indicated that they would try to listen reflectively. Qualities such as being non-judgemental and objective were considered important. It was seen as necessary to encourage the person 'to question', 'to be critical', 'to assess' and 'to evaluate' the experience. Several people observed that mystical phenomena are not extra-ordinary. For example:

> I tried to communicate interest in what they were saying, what they experienced and I tried to help them to understand that there is not something either stupidly self-deceivingly exceptional or something that indicates their own superiority - it's the normality of the experiences and how common they are - neither exaggerating their importance nor writing them off and trying to help them to be a little cool about it.

The phenomena associated with mysticism are part of an 'on-going reality'. Such phenomena are not uncommon although, as one interviewee observed, the psychological nature of a person and their life situation will contribute to whether or not they are prone to such experiences.

Although all the interviewees stressed the necessity of placing mystical experiences within the social context of the person concerned, less than one quarter mentioned stages of life, prayer or God. As we have observed, only two specific references to Christianity were made: one person suggested looking at mystical phenomena through the stories in the Gospel and another associated the authenticity of the experiences with the fruits of the Spirit in a person's life. Nevertheless, there was a consensus among the spiritual directors and therapists that reports of the mystical should be viewed in terms of the quality of the storyteller's life. In this way, those who were interviewed drew attention to the transformational changes that

were observable in the lives of the storytellers.

5.4.3 Part C: The Model of the Landscape of the Soul

After an introduction to the model of the 'landscape of the soul', the spiritual directors were given an opportunity to comment as to whether they perceived the model potentially useful and relevant to their lives and working situations.[59] In addition, they were asked how they would change or adapt it.

Personal Relevancy

The personal reactions to the model were mixed. Where the model was rejected, three general reasons emerged. The first explanation of why the model was not personally relevant was an overall distrust or difficulty with models. One person observed: 'I think models are like poetry and I am very bad at poetry'. The second area of rejection concerned personal constructs. For two people the model did not fit with personal perspectives and ways of acting:

> I have other paths or constructs which I would use...Personally, I would find the model has limited use.
>
> I think that my education and my general cultural nurturing has meant that I tend to analyse, categorise, make distinctions and so on. But I am very well aware that analytical strategies are largely inappropriate even in sociology but certainly in religion...I find it interesting but in my own thinking and my own dealing with other people, I don't operate in this kind of layout.

The third objection to the model was related to its Christian stance. One person did not find the model useful because it was not seen to be grounded in the Gospel. This person said, 'I think that I want to put things into the context of the Gospel and let things happen there'.

The majority of the interviewees reported that they found the model personally useful (16). There were four general areas in which the model was seen as valuable. First, it articulated their personal experience 'far more precisely' than they had ever expressed it. One person said, 'I could never articulate it in that way: it's about pastoral experience informing theology'. Second, the model challenged the awareness of the interviewees and they found this a beneficial experience:

> You are making me look at things which I am not aware of looking at before.

---

[59] Time had been allowed for a discusion of the model and with many of those interviewed, this discussion was far-ranging and comprehensive.

> It might help me to pay more attention to an area where I feel that I don't have any tools.
>
> So, it's a model which I have probably used and feel very comfortable to use and I probably didn't realise that I was using a model like that.

Third, the model was personally stimulating for some of the interviewees. Having drawn attention to the different approaches to mysticism it, one person said that the model 'whet my appetite to learn more'. Fourth, the model affirmed both the personal and working experience of some of the interviewees. One person said, 'It is my experience and to get it affirmed by someone else is actually very helpful'.

Potential Usefulness

Similar to the responses concerning personal relevancy, the reactions to the model with reference to the working environment were variable. Out of four people who were adverse to the model, two people said that they found the model interesting, although it did not reflect their experience of listening to others. The principal reason given for the inadequacy of the model was that it was too theoretical. One person commented: 'It is more useful as an academic tool to look at the way people write about mysticism'.

However, areas of congruence between the model and praxis were recognised. The majority of the spiritual directors and therapists interviewed stated that the model fitted with their situations. They considered that the model might be a useful tool in their work. One comment was that the model 'resonates with reality'. One person said, 'I think that it does fit especially when I think of one or two people who have had some strong experiences, it does seem to fit with them'. An interesting comparison was drawn between the model and the practical situation by several of the interviewees. It was observed that the model paralleled their pattern of reflective listening. For instance:

> I would say that it reflects the ways I approach the questions that people bring to me in order to discern what's going on and where there is something that feels that 'this is a God experience' - something that links in with reality and testable in terms of their responses.
>
> Yes, I think it does. You asked me how do I respond to people who say that they have had this experience and I think it is a neat conceptualisation of what I try to do.

Two of the interviewees recapitulated step by step how they respond to instances of reported mystical experiences. They paralleled each aspect in their listening

processes with a dimension drawn from the model.

In addition to reflecting the listening situation, the model was also identified as a useful tool for looking at and understanding the occurrence of the mystical in the narratives that arise in practice:

> It gives me a series of pegs upon which I can hang things on - yes, that fits there and the pegs relate to each other in a system.
>
> I am concerned that using your model would help me to think what I am doing as a spiritual director - something to work on.

One person described the model as a map and another as 'a tool for analysing rather than a tool for prescriptions'. Although there were criticisms of the model and adaptations were suggested, it appeared that the model did reflect the listening situations of many of the interviewees.

Considering the personal reactions to the model as well as its evaluation with respect to praxis, the question which remains to be addressed is whether the model was seen as potentially useful. As we have observed earlier, the replies fell into four main categories. There was one person who rejected the model outright. The model did not resonate either with personal or working experience. Others rejected the model with reservations (3). Although they did not find the model either personally or practically useful, they identified people or situations where the model might be applicable. Therefore, in their estimation, the model did have a potential, albeit limited, value. Similarly, there were those who nominally accepted the model with reservations (9). They found the model personally and/or practically useful but at the same time criticised certain aspects or suggested modifications. The responses ranged from those which expressed interest - 'It's interesting to see the different aspects laid out in relationship to each other. It gives a sense of context, dynamics etc.' - to affirmation - 'It's a good model'. All the respondents in this group provided some sort of criticism indicating where they perceived a misfit between the model and their personal experience or working reality. Finally, there were those who accepted the model without any critique being given (7).

Population Variables and the Usefulness of the Model

Two additional examinations were made in order to address the question of whether there was any connection between the different population variables and the perceived usefulness of the model.

In summary, there did not appear to be an association between a person's age, work experience or score on Hood's M Scale and the perception of the relevancy of the model. As we observed from the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation, there is some indication, although not statistically valid, that the model might be more useful for those who are just beginning to act as spiritual directors. Nevertheless, in relation to this particular population sample of spiritual directors and therapists, it would appear that the relevancy of the model is a personal matter.

The second set of relationships investigated pertained to the different groupings of the population. The groups which were examined included male/female, spiritual director/therapist and lay/ordained. The differences in the responses between each of the groupings appear to be due to personal preference. That is, a particular pattern in responses could not be distinguished. As with the population variables, it can be said that for this sample of spiritual directors and therapists, the acceptance or rejection of the model appears to be dependent upon personal factors.

5.5 Critique of the Model

In the pastoral cycle, the return to the practical situation allows for a comparison of the theoretical model with the problem situation in the real world, in this case, the model of the 'landscape of the soul' and the different understandings of the mystical that can arise in spiritual direction. This comparison provides a potential opportunity for questioning and discussion. In the last part of the survey, time was given to allow the spiritual directors and therapists to highlight specific areas where they perceived a misfit between the model and praxis. In addition to this critique of the model, a study of the overall validity of the survey and the reliability of the interpretation of the data can be found in Appendix B.

5.5.1 The Respondents' Critique of the Model

In exploring whether the model could be potentially useful in spiritual direction or in the therapeutic situation when reports of the mystical arise in conjunction with the stories that are told, the respondents in the survey were invited to critique the model of the 'landscape of the soul'.

Areas of Divergence

The model was perceived to be inadequate in six ways: personal reasons, the inclusiveness of the model, the model's complexity, the reductionism seen as inherent in the model, the diagrammatic presentation and the place of God or ultimate reality in the model.

As we have already observed in discussing the usefulness of the model, the personal reasons associated with a misfit between the model and reality included the use of other constructs in the listening situation, the distrust of an analytic approach and a general scepticism about models.

In addition to a lack of personal relevancy, the model was criticised on the issue of inclusiveness. In the introduction to the model given in the survey, it was specifically stated that the model was being restricted to Christianity because of limited resources. Nevertheless, five of the interviewees commented on the problem of inclusiveness. One person said: 'I think that the difficulty with this model is that you are only taking a Christian perspective'. Another person highlighted the theistic stance in a comment: 'I think that ultimate reality could be non-personal; that would be another modification of it'. For two people, inclusiveness was not restricted to various religious traditions but included the totality of human experience. Thus, one person suggested: 'You could expand it across the whole of human experience. I see how you could adapt it to any spiritual path'. Lack of inclusiveness of other theistic and non-theistic beliefs was one of the main critiques of the model.

The complexity of the model provided another area where there was a perceived divergence from reality. Two people felt that there was a need to show more clearly the complexity of the connections between the different systems and sub-systems. Another person thought that the relational system needed to be more fully developed.

Although systems thinking tries to avoid reductionism and view the world from a holistic perspective, three people found the model reductionist. One person objected to the hierarchical nature of the model, particularly with relation to the subsystems. This critique of the model as reductionist was linked closely to the fifth area of criticism which concerned the way that the model was illustrated and presented.

Several people commented on the inadequacy of the diagrammatic aspects of the model. Originally, the elements of the 'landscape of the soul' had been represented by boxes joined with arrows rather than the network of inter-connected circles. One person observed that 'Boxes of lists tend to separate things instead of bringing them together'. Hence, systematising the model by using boxes and arrows for connections highlighted the parts rather than conveying a holistic picture of the inter-relationships between the different systems. One person said the model was: 'Too reductionist...your model needs an Einsteinian model of the universe, a curved universe which curls back on itself, a four-dimensional shape'. Shape appeared important because three others also identified a need for a three-or-four-dimensional model.

The difficulty associated with diagrammatic presentation was related to another criticism, that of the place of God or ultimate reality in the model. One of the interviewees commented that: 'I wouldn't think of ultimate reality as so much as out there as the picture seems to present it'. Thus, if this model is to be further developed and elaborated, it needs to be pictorially re-conceptualised.

Areas of Congruence

As well as commenting on points where the model was inadequate or should be modified, observations were made about the model's relevancy, such as its ability to articulate personal or working experience. Similarly, other comments contrasted with those statements concerning areas where a misfit between model and reality had been perceived.

As observed, two of the criticisms of the model were related to its ability to deal with the complexity of the situation and with its reductionism. The first of these criticisms highlights the need for more detailed research into the processes and interconnections between the systems described. The second criticism expressed concern that the philosophical framework of the model, based as it is on systems thinking, is too reductionistic. Any model dealing with human life, particularly in conjunction with mysticism, needs to keep a balance between structural elements and the processes involved. It is conceded that more research is necessary in both these areas. Nevertheless, for some of those interviewed, the model was perceived to maintain an equilibrium between the various elements involved in spiritual direction.

One person said: 'I would say of the complexity of mystical experience: it reflects both the exterior and the interior and the difference between humanistic and Christian perspectives'. In the listening situation, the landscapes of the soul are complex and reflect the unique story of each individual. The model was considered supple enough to take into account this diverse reality:

> I think that your model is generous and flexible enough to allow one to hear other people's experience and allow it to take its shape which I think is important.

A model is not an end in itself. It is a tool that may or may not be useful in certain circumstances. For some of those who were interviewed, the model of the 'landscape of the soul' was seen to be too simplistic and reductionist, whilst for others it adequately represented the complexities of their personal and working reality.

Models provide a particular lens through which a situation may be viewed. As such, they contain particular implications. Interestingly, some of the interviewees drew attention to certain ramifications contingent upon the model of the 'landscape of the soul'. In one such comment, a person said:

> I think that all the time one has to push the boundaries of thought and move to something more holistic. Jesus is our environment, if you like. We have to have that connection with where we are from and all that surrounds us and even if you do not pinpoint a mystical experience, it's the process, the daily process of allowing God to come.

Thus, this model was seen as presenting the possibility for alternative patterns of spirituality and the understanding of mysticism.

A problem which can arise when writing about mysticism is that God is bracketed out of the discussion. Thus, a sense of process is reduced to phenomenological descriptions of discrete events. This is a problem which can easily arise within a model. However, for one interviewee, the model was able to maintain the sense of the living interaction between God and creation. Of the landscape model, this person said: 'It's a felt quality of what it is to have an intimation of the transcendent in the midst in different ways'. For another interviewee, the model presented a vision:

> I never could have put it together that way. It makes sense - a lot of sense. It's a practical diagram - it's not theoretical, it's practical. It's like a diagram of a vision of what can be...It points the way to where one can go.

Moreover, if the model is taken seriously, it has social implications, as another

person pointed out when critiquing the model:

> Spirituality is about politics, about social action, about society, about the way we live. Spiritual direction is about assisting a person to discern their place in the world: it isn't just about helping them to reach some heights of union but that may come into it. The union is about everybody and everything not just the union of God. You can't actually be united with creation without actually caring for it.

The model of the 'landscape of the soul' does not discount the understanding of mysticism as a particular type of unitive event or as a stage in spiritual development. Rather, as one person observed, the model it points to a further dimension and 'push[es] the boundaries'.

5.6 Conclusion of the Survey

In the pastoral cycle, a problem situation has been identified. This related to the model based on the metaphor of pilgrimage. Here, the goal of spiritual life, seen as union with God, can become linked exclusively with particular types of experiences or states of prayer that are nominated as mystical. What can then happen is that various understandings associated with the mystical can arise in spiritual direction. This is a problem for two reasons: first, the participants in spiritual direction may be speaking at cross-purposes and second, their presuppositions may affect the process of discerning the movements of the Holy Spirit in the storyteller's life. For example, the mystical may be identified with particular subjective states, yet such experiences may not necessarily be related to God. Hence, altered states of consciousness are an unreliable indication of a person's relationship with God.

The survey illustrated three points related to the problem of interpreting the mystical in spiritual direction. First, the survey highlighted the diversity of understandings that can be found in the practical situation. This reflects a similar variety of interpretations that are exhibited in popular literature such as The Way of the Mystic, Reality through the Looking Glass or The Mystical Chorus. Second, some spiritual directors do associate the mystical with particular types of subjective experiences and with an elite and, on the basis of this, exclude themselves and the people to whom they listen from the possibility of being mystics. However, such an exclusion presents a conundrum in practice linked with the third observation. The survey drew attention to the assumption held by many spiritual directors and therapists, whether implicitly or explicitly, that encounter and relationship with God

cannot be limited to subjective experiences such as in altered states or to particular stages in prayer or psycho-spiritual life.

With respect to the survey results, the model of the 'landscape of the soul' presented a possible resolution of the problem situation. First, the model provided a framework in which particular experiences, stages of growth and development and the encounter and relationship with God could be seen in association with one another. This framework was found to reflect the often-inarticulated understandings of the spiritual directors and therapists. Moreover, the networks represented by the geology of experiencing, geomorphology of growing and the ecology of relating were seen by some of the spiritual directors and therapists to coinhere with different dimensions in the process of listening and discerning.

Second, as it had been postulated, the strength of the model was identified as its focus on the encounter with God in the present moment. That is, God is encountered in situ in a particular landscape of the soul. In the model, the output of the transformational activity of the landscape was seen as union with God. However, it was suggested that such a union is manifested in the quality of a person's relationship with God and with other people and that this is manifested in the fruits of the Spirit. In the survey, the spiritual directors and therapists recognised the response of the person within the total context of his or her life as an important attribute for assessing spiritual life, particularly any claims for mystical union. Moreover, in the survey, there were intimations that there could be alternative patterns to the understandings of the mystical as either an experience or a stage of growth. Previously, in exploring and constructing the model, I have drawn attention to Karl Rahner's 'mysticism of everyday'. One of the observations made in the survey was that the model highlights 'the daily process of allowing God to come'.

Finally, in using landscape as a metaphor and in adopting systems thinking, the model seeks to present a comprehensive overview of spiritual life and more particularly, the place of some of the different conceptions of mysticism within that life. Although the model is simplistic, it can function as a framework in which some ideas about spiritual and mysticism can be situated. Moreover, one of the spiritual directors said: 'I think that all the time one has to push the boundaries of thought and move to something more holistic'. This was recognised as one of the strengths of the model by some of those who interviewed.

5.7 Summary Of Chapter Five: A Survey of Spiritual Directors and Therapists

In this chapter, the comparison of the model with the practical situation which was initiated in the examination of the life and writings of Clare of Assisi was concluded with a survey of contemporary spiritual directors and therapists. The purpose of the survey was to assess the potential usefulness of the landscape model in spiritual direction.

The practical situation was accessed through the lives and work of spiritual directors and therapists who were concerned with spiritual issues in the narratives of others. It was hypothesised that a syncretistic mixture of ideas concerning mysticism can be held by those engaged in spiritual direction and this claim was substantiated by this particular sample. The sample population was deliberately chosen to be diverse in order that the comparison could be as comprehensive as was possible. There was a range in age and working experience and, as the Hood M Scale illustrated, in 'mystical' experience. In addition, there was a mix in gender, working orientation and religious status. Although the perceived usefulness of the model was correlated with these factors, the relevancy of the model proved to be subjective.

Through the survey, it was demonstrated that the landscape model could potentially provide a useful framework in which to situate different ideas concerning the mystical. In the critique of the model, the need for greater elaboration was identified. Nevertheless, the model was perceived by many of the spiritual directors and therapists as a potentially useful tool, particularly for those beginning the practice of spiritual direction.

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 5.1 Composition of the Survey Group

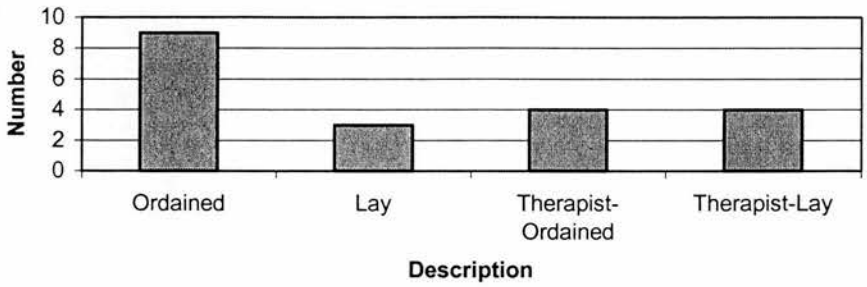

Figure 5.2 Age Distribution

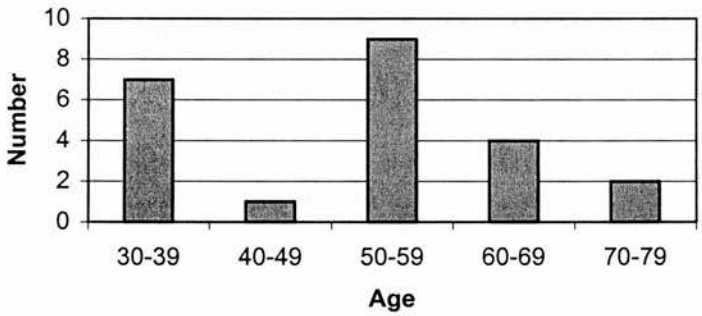

Figure 5.3 Range of Work Experience

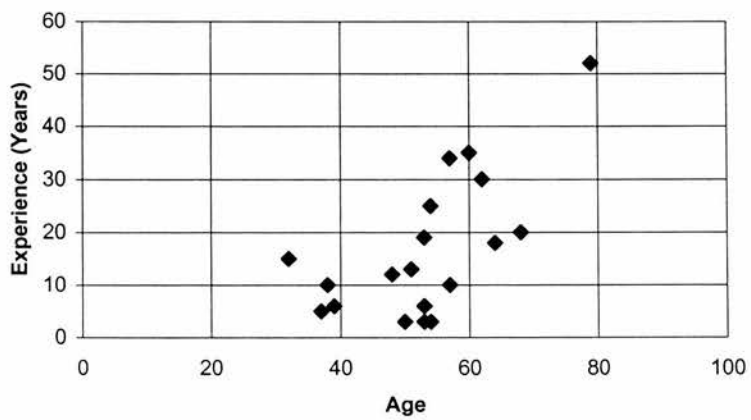

Table 5.1 Reading Guide – Ultimate Reality

Category		Question
1. **Benign** view		What is the tenor of the definition?
2. **Evil** addressed		Does the definition include an explicit or implicit reference to evil?
3. Orientation	**Theistic/ Non-theistic**	Is God, a Creator or some transcendent 'other' mentioned?
4. Human Control	**Assertive**	Can a human act upon/do something in relation to ultimate reality? Are active verbs used to describe the relation of the person with ultimate reality?
	Accepting	Is the person acted upon by ultimate reality? Are the verbs used passive?
5. Path	**Particular/ Universal**	Is a specific religious tradition named or terms associated with a tradition used? Is the definition given in general terms?

Table 5.2 Belief about Ultimate Reality

No.			Orientation		Human control		Path	
	Benign View	Evil Addressed	Theistic	Non-theistic	Assertive	Accepting	Universal	Particular
1	●			●			●	
2	●	●	●		●	●	●	
3	●	●	●		●		●	
4	●		●				●	
5	●		●				●	
6	●		●			●		●
7	●		●			●	●	
8	●	●			●	●	●	
9								
10	●		●		●	●	●	
11	●			●	●	●	●	
12	●				●		●	
13	●		●		●	●	●	
14	●		●		●	●	●	
15	●		●			●		●
16	●		●		●	●	●	
17	●		●				●	
18	●			●			●	
19	●			●	●	●	●	
20	●		●		●	●	●	

Table 5.3 Reading Guide – The Meaning of the Word 'Mysticism'

Reading	Perspective	Notes and Questions		
1	General	Certain direct comments about the word 'mysticism' or its cognates may be expressed which indicates the person's relative comfort with its usage.		
		Questions:	**Response:**	
	Ease of Use:	1. Frequently used?		
		2. Seldom used?		
	Orientation:	3. Theistic?		
		4. Non-theistic?		
	Human Control:	5. Is human participation active?	e.g. hungrily seek	
		6. Is human participation passive?	e.g. given, revealed	
		7. Does the description implicitly or explicitly contain both active and passive elements?	e.g. communion with, being in touch	
2	Experience	Mysticism has been phenomenologically described using such words as ineffable, timeless, spaceless, perceptionless. It has been affectively portrayed with both positive and negative qualities such as awe, wonder, peace, holiness, joy or dread. It is also associated with a sense of unity.		
		Questions:	**Response:**	
		1. Is there a focus upon a particular type of experience?	e.g. the experience of..., an experience of...	
	Characteristics:	2. Related positively/negatively to human senses?	e.g. a felt experience, timeless, spaceless	
		3. Ineffable?	e.g. beyond words	
		4. Affective?	e.g. awe, wonder	
		5. Noetic?	e.g. a knowing	
		6. Unifying vision?	e.g. all things are One	
		7. Pure consciousness?	e.g. the void, perceptionless	
3	Development	Mysticism has been interpreted as a cumulative stage in the process of human growth and development. It has also been located as an end stage in spiritual life. Mysticism is also identified with particular types of prayer.		
		Questions:	**Response:**	
		1. Is there mention of a particular stage in psychological life or spiritual life		
		2. Is there mention of stages of prayer?		
4	Relational	For the Christian, mysticism can be seen as a relationship with God? It can be described in such terms as communion, fellowship, union, 'being in touch', and encounter.		
		Questions:	**Response:**	
		1. Is there a focus upon relationship with God?		
5	Perspective	Mysticism can be considered as a unique experience, a stage of development or as a relationship. A person's understanding of mysticism may be grounded in one or more of these perspectives.		
		Questions:	**Responses:**	
			Yes	**No**
		1. Does one perspective predominate?		
		2. Is it experiential?		
		3. Is it developmental?		
		4. Is it relational?		
		5. Is it experiential and developmental?		
		6. Is it experiential and relational?		
		7. Is it developmental and relational?		

Table 5.4 The Meaning of the Word 'Mysticism'

No.	General							Types of Approach and Characteristics									Prespective						
	Ease of Usage		Ultimate Reality		Active	Passive	Both	Experiential	Ineffable	Affective	Noetic	Unifying Vision	Pure Consciousness	Life Stages	Prayer	Relational	None	E	D	R	E/D	E/R	D/R
	Yes	No	Theistic	Non-thesitic																			
1		♦	♦			♦		♦	♦								♦					♦	
2			♦			♦					♦							♦						
3				♦			♦	♦								♦						♦	
4			♦			♦		♦							♦	♦						♦	
5				♦			♦	♦	♦	♦						♦						♦	
6			♦			♦		♦		♦								♦					
7			♦			♦										♦				♦			
8			♦				♦	♦		♦	♦					♦						♦	
9				♦		♦		♦	♦									♦					
10				♦			♦	♦		♦	♦					♦						♦	
11			♦														♦						
12		♦	♦					♦										♦					
13		♦	♦					♦	♦									♦					
14		♦	♦			♦		♦										♦					
15			♦			♦		♦										♦					
16			♦				♦	♦		♦					♦	♦						♦	
17				♦		♦		♦		♦	♦							♦					
18				♦				♦	♦									♦					
19			♦				♦	♦		♦						♦						♦	
20			♦			♦		♦										♦					

Legend:

E	Experiential
D	Developmental
R	Relational
E/D	Experiential and Developmental
E/R	Experiential and Relational
D/R	Developmental and Relational

Table 5.5 Reading Guide – Personal Experiences

Age:	Antecedents:	
Event:	Series of Events:	
Sense of Presence:		
Orientation:	Theistic:	
	Non-theistic:	
Focus:	'I'	
	'Other'	
	Movement between 'I' and 'Other'	
Personal control:	Active:	
	Passive:	
	Both active and passive elements:	
		Characteristics:
Dominant Perspective:	Experiential:	
	Developmental:	
	Relational:	
	Experiential and Developmental:	
	Experiential and Relational:	
	Developmental and Relational:	
	No particular orientation dominates:	
Consonance with predominant perspective in Question Two:		
Personal responses:	Feelings:	
	Cognitive:	
Consequences:	Self:	
	Others:	
	Ultimate reality:	
Points brought to the attention of the interviewer:		

Table 5.6 Analysis of Reports of Personal Experiences of the Mystical

No.	General															Types of Approach and Characteristics									Prespective						
	Age	Sense of Presence			Event		Antecedents				Orient-ation		Active	Passive	Both	Experiential	Ineffable	Affective	Noetic	Nature	Unifying Vision	Pure consciousness	Life Stages	Prayer	Relational	None	E	D	R	E/D	E/R	D/R
		Yes	No	Intermittent	Single	Series	None	Distress	Prayer	Other	Theistic	Non-thesitic																				
1	A	⌘			■				■		⌘	■		■	⌘	■						■			⌘	☒					
2	A			⌘	■			■			⌘	■		☒		■	⌘	⌘	■						⌘	☒					
3	C/A	⌘				■			■		☒			■	⌘	■		■		⌘					⌘	■				⌘	
4	T/A			⌘		■			■		☒			■	⌘	■		■	■						☒					☒	
5	T/A	⌘				■				■	☒			☒		☒	■	☒	☒	■						☒					
6	T/A	⌘				■			■		☒				☒	☒		☒		☒					☒					☒	
7	T/A	⌘				■				■		☒		☒		☒		☒	☒	■					■	⌘				■	
8	A		⌘			■				■		■		■		■		■								■					
9	A			⌘		■			■			☒		■	⌘	■		■	■						⌘	■				⌘	
10	C/A	□										□			□										□			□			
11	YA			⌘	■					■	■			☒		■	⌘	☒	☒							☒					
12	A		⌘			■	■					■		■		■		■		■						■					
13	A			⌘	■			■			☒			■		☒		☒	☒	⌘					⌘	■				⌘	
14	C/A	⌘				■			■						☒	☒		☒							☒					☒	
15	YA	⌘			■					■		☒		■	⌘	☒			☒						⌘	■				⌘	
16	C/A	□									□					□		□							□					□	
17	C/A	□									□					□		□								□					
18	C/A			□								□		□		□		□	□							□					
19	A	⌘			■					■	⌘	■		☒		■		☒							⌘	■				⌘	
20	YA			⌘	■		■				■	⌘		☒		☒		☒			■					☒					

Key:

C/A	Childhood and Adult
T/A	Adolescent and Adult
YA	Young Adult
A	Adult
■	Q.3 Example of an Event
□	Q.3 Example of a Sense of Presence
☒	Both Q.3 and Q.5
⌘	Q.5 Example of a Sense of Presence

Figure 5.4 Age of Reported Mystical Experiences

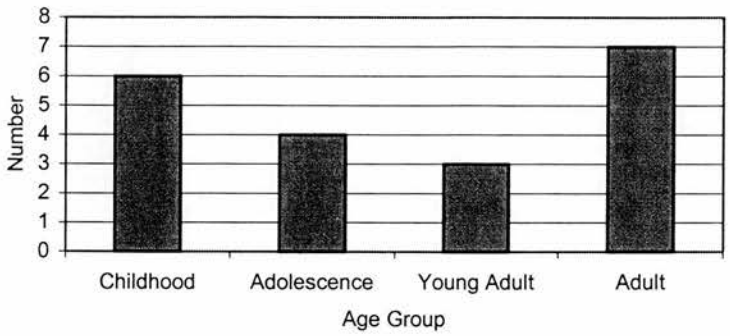

Figure 5.5 Antecedents to Events Considered as Mystical

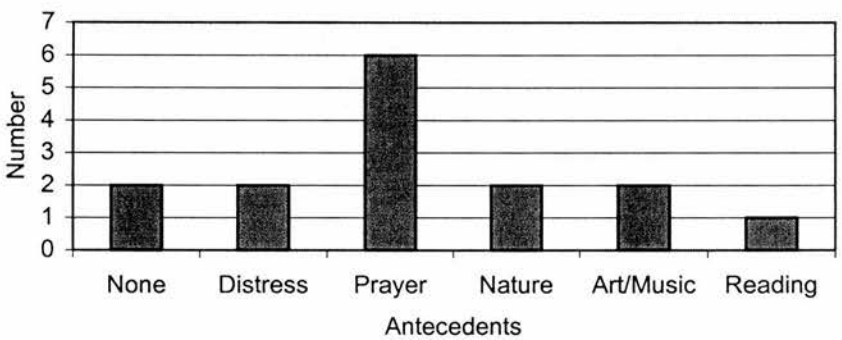

Figure 5.6 Comparison of Reports of a Sense of Presence

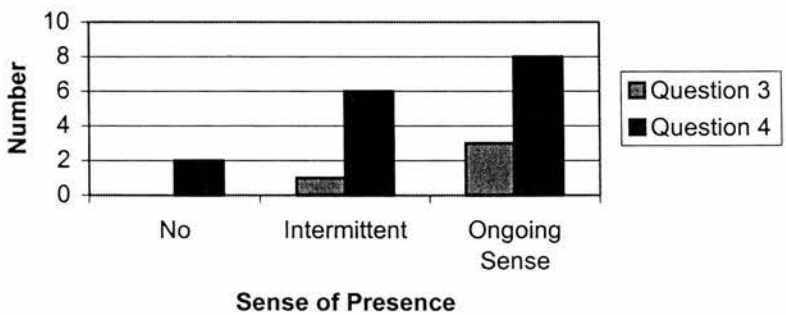

Figure 5.7 Comparison of Scores on Hood's Scale of Mystical Experiences

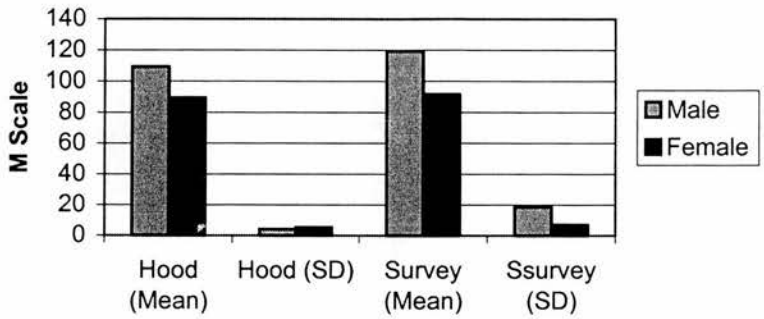

Table 5.7 The Intensity of the Listening Situation

The Listening Situation	Number
Many people for periods greater than a year	4
Many people for periods greater and less than a year	3
A few people for periods greater than a year	11
Many or few people for periods greater or less than a year	2

Table 5.8 Congruence of Reports with Experience

An experience	Personal Experience	Reported in Work
...which was both timeless and spaceless	5	7
...which was incapable of being expressed in words	14	18
...in which something greater than myself seemed to absorb me	12	16
...of profound joy	16	19
...in which I realised the oneness of myself with all things	7	14
...in which a new view of reality was revealed to me	13	15
...which left me with a feeling of awe	16	17
...in which all things seemed to be conscious	3	5

Table 5.9 Listening to Reports

Affective Response: How does the person feel when mystical elements are introduced into the narrative situation?	Comfortable:
	Uncomfortable:
	Mixed feelings:
Cognitive Response: What does the person think about mystical elements? Are they ...	Useful:
	Not Useful:
	Mixed Usefulness:
Behavioural Response:	Reflective listening with the person:
	Grounding: Is the experience related to
	a. stages of life?
	b. patterns of prayer?
	c. social/environmental context ?
	d. God?
Other:	

Table 5.10 Responses to Mystical Phenomena in the Listening Situation

	Response										
No.	Affective		Cognitive			Behavioural					
	Com-fort-able	Un-com-fort-able	Mixed Feel-ings	Use-ful	Mixed Useful-ness	Reflective Listening	Stages of Life	Prayer/ Spiritual Journey	Social Context	God	Other
1	●			●		●	●		●	●	...to accept these [experiences] as part of on-going reality
2	●			●		●			●	●	It's real for the person.
3			●		●	●			●		
4						●			●		
5			●		●	●			●		...act upon the positive
6	●			●		●		●	●		...allow them to be judges of their own experiences...
7	●				●	●			●		...it's the normality...
8	●					●			●		
9			●		●	●	●	●	●		
10			●		●	●			●		
11			●		●	●			●		
12	●					●			●		
13	●				●	●		●	●		...discernment of spirits
14	●			●		●	●	●	●	●	Once I got through the questioning, then I would introduce the Gospels
15	●			●		●	●	●	●		
16			●		●	●	●	●	●	●	...produces the fruits of the Spirit
17			●		●	●			●		
18		●									
19			●		●	●	●		●		
20	●				●	●			●		

Figure 5.8 The Context for Evaluating Mystical Phenomena

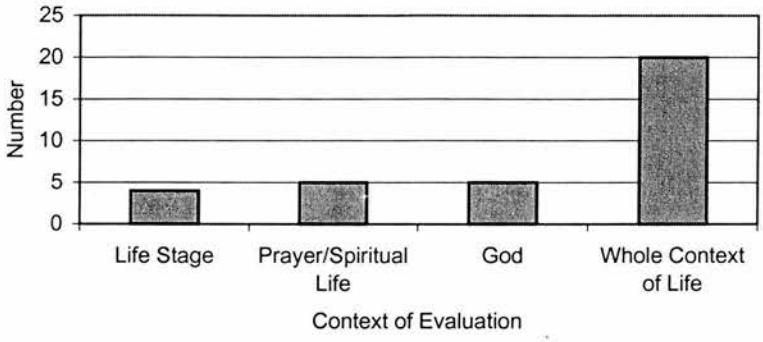

Table 5.11 Usefulness of the Model

No.	Personal					Listening Situation					Overall Usefulness								
											No	No But				Yes But			Yes
	-2	-1	0	1	2	-2	-1	0	1	2	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
1					●					●									●
2			●						●							●			
3		●				●						●							
4					●					●									●
5					●					●									●
6				●					●								●		
7					●				●									●	
8	●					●					●								
9				●						●								●	
10		●					●						●						
11			●						●							●			
12					●				●									●	
13					●					●									●
14					●				●									●	
15		●					●						●						
16				●						●								●	
17					●					●									●
18					●					●									●
19					●					●									●
20			●						●							●			

Figure 5.9 Overall Usefulness of the Model of the 'Landscape of the Soul'

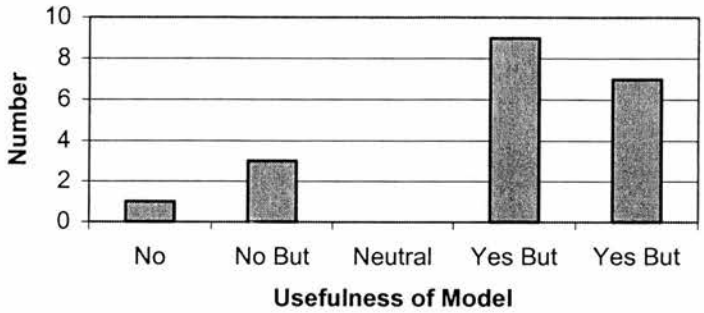

Table 5.12 Spearman Rank-Order Correlation for Population Variables

Variable	H_0	H_1	r_s	Decision at $p = 0.05$
Age	That a person's age is not related to the usefulness of the model.	That there is a negative relationship between age and usefulness of the model. That is, an older person would find the model of less use.	0.07	H_0 is not rejected. There does not appear to be an association between a person's age and the relevancy of the model.
Experience (Years)	That a person's listening experience (in years) is not related to the usefulness of the model.	That there is a negative relationship between years of listening experience and usefulness of the model. That is, the more experienced person would be less likely to find the model useful.	-0.16	H_0 is not rejected. There does not appear to be an association between a person's listening experience and the relevancy of the model.
Hood's M Scale	That a person's Hood's M Scale score is not related to the usefulness of the model.	That there is a positive relationship between an M Scale score and the usefulness of the model. That is, a person who scored high on the M Scale would be more receptive to the model.	0.14	H_0 is not rejected. There does not appear to be an association between a person's Hood's M Scale score and the relevancy of the model.

Table 5.13 Chi-Square Test and Fisher Exact Test for Groups

Variable	H_o	H_1	χ^2 (p)	Fisher p	Decision at p = 0.05
Male-Female	That the observed differences between male and female rejection or acceptance of the model are due to chance	That the observed differences between male-female rejection or acceptance of the model are not due to chance	1.25 (0.26)	0.29	H_0 is not rejected. The observed differences between male-female rejection or acceptance of the model are due to chance
Spiritual Director-Therapist	That the observed differences between spiritual director's and therapist's rejection or acceptance of the model are due to chance	That the observed differences between spiritual director's and therapists' rejection or acceptance of the model are not due to chance	1.11 (0.29)	0.30	H_0 is not rejected. The observed differences between spiritual director's and therapist's rejection or acceptance of the model are due to chance
Lay-Ordained	That the observed differences between lay and ordained rejection or acceptance of the model are due to chance	That the observed differences between lay and ordained rejection or acceptance of the model are not due to chance	1.83 (0.18)	0.21	H_0 is not rejected. The observed differences between lay and ordained rejection or acceptance of the model are due to chance.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, landscape has been used metaphorically to develop a model for understanding and evaluating Christian spiritual life. Part One of the thesis, representing the beginning of the pastoral cycle, located the thesis within the practice of spiritual direction. Landscape is a pervasive, although often subconscious, element in human life and its images permeate the stories that we tell. A motif that occurs in spiritual direction is that of the pilgrim travelling through an inner landscape towards the Kingdom of God.

However, two problems can arise with the use of the pilgrim model of Christian spiritual life. First, it is possible to become over-futuristic and consequently, lose touch with other people and our environment. Second, it is possible to confuse the goal with altered states of consciousness and to become focused on these states rather than on God. In addition, altered states of consciousness or stages in prayer or life can be interpreted as mystical. It is then possible for a variety of understandings of the mystical to be operative in spiritual direction, thus leading to confusion in discourse. Such understandings reflect our conception of Christian spiritual life and hence, influence our perceptions of this life.

Considering these problems associated with the model of pilgrimage, I concluded that a complementary model to describe Christian spiritual life would be useful. Hypothetically, such a model would focus upon the encounter with God in the present moment. In addition, it would provide a framework in which to situate some of the different understandings of the mystical that can arise in spiritual direction.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis has been to examine Christian spiritual life, not in terms of a pilgrimage through a landscape, but as the landscape itself. Hence, it has been asked whether the principles of geography could contribute towards our understanding of Christian spirituality, particularly with respect to what we conceive as mystical. Hitherto, the metaphor of landscape has not been systematically explored as an alternative to the metaphor of pilgrimage.

In this thesis, I have interpreted landscape as a composite of natural and

human systems. A landscape consists of various physiographic and ecological systems interacting to create a spatial area that is recognisable as a whole. Thinking in terms of systems provides one method for analysing a landscape and is integral in the development of the metaphoric model.

Part Two of the thesis corresponded to the reflective phase of the pastoral cycle. Here, I explored the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul' in two ways that were analogous to a general representational map and a thematic map. In the general representational mapping, the concern was Christian spiritual life. With the thematic mapping, some different understandings associated with mysticism were investigated within the framework of the landscape model.

Chapter 2 comprised a representational mapping of the model and was concerned with Christian spiritual life at a general level. If the 'landscape of the soul' is considered in terms of a landscape system, Christian spiritual life could be seen as the emergence into a person's awareness of the inter-relationship between God and the totality of his or her life.

Numerous elements or subsystems such as atmospheric, geological, geomorphological, ecological and socio-cultural factors interact to shape a landscape. Similarly, in the 'landscape of the soul', various networks interact with one another. I suggested three networks of systems analogous to structures and processes found in human life. The geology of experiencing represented physical and psychological processes related to human experiencing. The geomorphology of growing was connected with human growth and development. In the 'landscape of the soul', growth can be evaluated specifically with reference to forms of prayer or more generally with respect to psycho-spiritual stages in human development. The ecology of relating depicted the flow of God's love through the various interrelationships present in the 'landscape of the soul'. Each of these networks contributes to the landscape as a whole, that is, to an individual's unique spirituality and experience of God.

Landscape can be described in terms of structure and function as well as changes that occur over time. Landscape emerges from the composite of natural and human systems and its structure can be describe in terms of a matrix (the most common background elements), patches (areas of differentiation) and corridors (areas

facilitating communication). In the 'landscape of the soul', the matrix is comprised of those physical, psychological and socio-cultural factors (including belief systems) that are shared with other people at that time and place. Patches represent those characteristics that are specific to the individual. In the 'landscape of the soul', corridors provide places where God can be encountered and which also facilitate the transfer and transformation of God's love. In Christian spiritual life, the scriptures, the liturgy and prayer are traditional corridors.

The function of a landscape refers to the dynamics of the system: what is happening in the landscape and what are the activities contributing to this process. I suggested that the 'landscape of the soul' might be called the system of transformation or re-creation in the love of God. In this system, God's self-revelation through Jesus Christ forms an input of love. A spiralling of love through which we are brought into union with God represented the transformational activity in the 'landscape of the soul'. In a process that is ever repeating itself, if we accept the love of God freely given to us in Jesus Christ and respond in love, we enter into the life of Christ and through Christ, God dwells in us.

Change in the landscape is equated with the output. I have suggested that the output is a union of love with God, that can be described as a harmony of action (or the union of will) with God's action (or will). Our actions and choices need to be seen against the backdrop of our whole life. Therefore, the fruits of the Spirit such as love, joy, and peace have traditionally been used for evaluating the quality of spiritual life.

The model of the 'landscape of the soul' emphasises the uniqueness of each person. It draws attention to the transforming activity of God's love in a person's life, that is, to a spiralling of love. Whereas in the pilgrimage model spiritual life is seen as a journey with a goal to be achieved, in the landscape model, spiritual life is perceived, *in situ*, centring on the present moment as the place of encounter between the person and God. Thus, the model can be seen as complementary to the pilgrim model.

Chapter 3 continued the general exploration of the metaphor of the 'landscape of the soul'. However, this chapter represented a thematic mapping of the model with reference to some of the different types of understandings that can be

associated with the word mysticism and it cognates. In the first chapter, I highlighted the problem that can arise with the pilgrimage model when the goal of Christian spiritual life becomes confused with altered states of consciousness that are assumed to embody the mystical. Thus, I began this chapter with three illustrations of syncretistic understandings of mysticism: *The Way of the Mystic*, by Betty Bethards and Jaclyn Catalfo, *Reality through the Looking-Glass: Science and Awareness in the Postmodern World*, by Christopher Clarke, and *The Mystical Chorus*, by Donald Broadribb. I associated each of these texts with a different way in which the mystical can be understood and I thematically mapped each of these ways according to landscape structure, function and change.

I associated *The Way of the Mystic*, by Betty Bethards and Jaclyn Catalfo, with a geology of experiencing because their text reflects an understanding of mysticism as a distinct experience of an altered state of consciousness. Similar to the geology of experiencing, this type of understanding of mysticism is concerned with physical and psychological factors related to the processes of human experiencing and consciousness. Moreover, like the geology of a landscape, such processes can be seen to underlie the 'landscape of the soul'. However, the debates related to this type of understanding of the mystical are diverse and wide-ranging, and therefore an exact mapping of mysticism as a distinct altered state of consciousness is not possible.

Reality through the Looking-Glass, by Christopher Clarke, was connected with a geomorphology of growing because Clarke has associated mysticism with a 'journey that leads much deeper'.[1] This suggests those types of understandings that consider the mystical with reference to stages of prayer or psycho-spiritual development. It was observed that in these types of understandings, similar to the geology of experiencing, the mystical is still linked with particular subjective states. Whether interpreted as stages in prayer or as stages in life, these understandings present us with specialised landscapes from which people who do not conform to the patterns that have been defined can be excluded.

The Mystical Chorus, by Donald Broadribb, was coupled with an ecology of relating. In this case, the text by Broadribb was used to portray the opposite position

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[1] C J S Clarke, 1996, *Reality through the Looking-Glass*, 187.

of the one that he presented. Thus, mysticism was interpreted as a relationship with God occurring within the wider context of the community. Here, the mystical is the mystery of God that can be encountered in scripture, in liturgy and in prayer. Whether a movement towards God occurs through the affirmation of images (cataphatically) or through the negation of images (apophatically), the moment of union, in itself, is beyond human conception. This understanding of the mystical is less dependent on altered states of consciousness, although it does invite a person to participate in another reality that is revealed to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As in the general exploration of the 'landscape of the soul', the networks of systems represented by the geology of experiencing, the geomorphology of growing and the ecology of relating interact with each other in shaping the landscape as a whole. They can also be viewed in conjunction with landscape structure, function and change. If we look at the structure of the landscape, we can see that in the matrix of any landscape, the patterns that are considered mystical vary according to time and place. Similar to the matrix, those personal experiences that are important in the 'landscape of the soul' are often dependent on what is considered valuable at any one time and place. Corridors of communication are variable and can include traditional means such as the Scriptures as well as other elements such as nature and music.

Activities that could be associated with each of the different systems were examined in the function of the landscape. Thus, the geology of experiencing was seen as the process of apprehension that included the disruption of everyday consciousness and its deconstruction or reconstruction (depending upon the philosophical viewpoint adopted). The geomorphology of growing included apprehension and thus the geology of experiencing is presupposed in the geomorphology of growing. Another activity identified with the geomorphology of growing was the processes of purification-illumination. These processes were seen as associated, where one degree of purification led to enlightenment that led, in turn, to further purification, like removing successive garments.[2] The ecology of relating comprised the activities of apprehension, purification-illumination and loving. In the ecology of relating, it is the activity of loving that is distinctive and central.

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[2] See Gregory of Nyssa quoted by Jean Daniélou, 1979, *From Glory to Glory*, 60.

Moreover, this activity involves a single-minded focus on Christ.

Change in the landscape has been associated with output. Although with each of the types of understandings of mysticism the output of the landscape is called union with God, each describes this union differently. With the geology of experiencing and the geomorphology of growing, union is depicted in terms of altered states of consciousness. However, with the ecology of relating, union is seen through intentional actions related to a relationship with God. When the output in a landscape was explored more fully, it was seen that some experiences that are claimed to be mystical are or can become pathological. Moreover, some people who are accorded the status of mystics do not have those subjective experiences that have been defined as mystical. Finally, some of those who have been excluded by definition were found to be capable of experiencing the mystical. Therefore, although union with God may be associated with altered states of consciousness, it is not limited to these states.

Through the use of the landscape model it was possible to situate some of the different types of understandings that have been linked with mysticism. In viewing the function of the landscape as a whole, it was proposed that the geology of experiencing could be perceived as an altered state of consciousness, but this was identified as being-in-love. The geomorphology of growing was perceived as a growth in attentiveness to God. Finally, the ecology of relating was understood as a mutual self-giving in love between God and a person. I suggested that this love might be seen through those actions that are in harmony with God and that overflow into everyday life. The landscape model allows for a more holistic picture of spiritual life in that it can accommodate the understanding of the mystical as altered states of consciousness as well as the understanding of the mystical as a relationship with God. Furthermore, because each individual can be considered as a unique landscape, everyone can be included. What develops from the thematic mapping of some of the different types of understandings of mysticism, is the picture of an everyday mysticism emerging from within the 'landscape of the soul'.

Part Three of the thesis moved back into the practical situation in the pastoral cycle. It is here, by the use of the story of Saint-Exupéry's maps, that 'the

farmer, the thirty sheep, [and] the brook' are mapped in the 'landscape of the soul'.[3] In other words, the thesis moves from a general and abstract development of the 'landscape of the soul' to a specific and personal application and evaluation of the model.

In Chapter 4, the model was tested in an individual case study. Clare of Assisi was chosen as an example because, as an historical person, her life and writings are accessible and open to enquiry. Furthermore, she has been recognised as a Christian mystic. Therefore, her life and writings were explored through the model in terms of landscape structure, function and change.

Structurally, one could surmise that there was little to differentiate Clare from her wider socio-cultural environment. Clare lived within the matrix of her times with reference to her life as a young noble, her devotion to the humanity of Christ, her visions, and her use of religious imagery such as nuptial metaphors and the image of the mirror. Similarly, like the other religious of her day, the Eucharist, the Word of God and prayer acted as corridors of communication. However, it is in the dynamics of spiritual life, that is, through the function of the landscape, that the uniqueness of Clare can be ascertained. Through the geology of experiencing, God's call to Clare and her subsequent conversion can be seen as mediated through Francis of Assisi. Moreover, this calling is sustained within Clare's monastic vocation. Here, the corridors of communication – the Eucharist, the Word of God and prayer – acted as places where God was encountered and as spaces in which her soul was united with God. Although from the perspective of a geomorphology of growing, Clare can be seen to practise traditional forms of mortification such as fasting and the use of a hair shirt, it is through her long struggle for the privilege of poverty that her sensitivity and attention to the love of God are deepened. The ecology of relating is manifested in Clare's relationship with God, as an exchange of love. That her love is not exclusive is demonstrated through Francis and as it overflows into her community of sisters. With respect to change in a landscape and an output in the landscape system related to union with God, the unity of mutual love is a theme in Clare's writings and is perhaps suggestive of union with God in Clare's life.

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[3] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1940, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, 9.

In this study of an individual case, the model highlighted the dynamics of spiritual life. Through this example, we could see an example of a balance between an inner and an outer landscape. For Clare, the inner landscape is characterised by a single-minded focus on God in an exchange of love that overflows into a wider network of relationships. Moreover, we could also see the importance of an outer landscape, through the significance that Clare's places upon her vocation to live the monastic life following the poverty of Christ. That Clare perceived her vocation as the place where God is encountered brings to mind a mysticism of everyday life. In this example of Clare of Assisi, we could see that the model is flexible enough to enable us to move from the general mapping in the reflective phase of the pastoral cycle to a specific and individual application in praxis.

In Chapter 5, the testing of the model in the practical situation was concluded with a survey conducted among spiritual directors and therapists. The main objective of the survey was to ascertain the potential usefulness of the landscape model in praxis. In the first chapter, I postulated that syncretistic understandings of mysticism can underpin the discourse in spiritual direction. Through an exploration of the understanding, experience of, and response to mysticism by the sample population, it was possible to confirm this conjecture. Therefore, there is a basis for the claim that a model or framework is needed in which different understandings of mysticism can be seen.

In the assessment of the model by spiritual directors and therapists, we found that the model's perceived usefulness was contingent upon personal preference. Nevertheless, many of the spiritual directors and therapists who were interviewed found that the landscape model articulated their personal and professional experience of the mystical in Christian spiritual life. The belief was articulated that, although complex, the model was flexible enough to take into account various contingencies in spiritual life. The landscape model was also seen as presenting an alternative pattern for understanding spiritual life, particularly as this pertains to mysticism. Furthermore, the model of the 'landscape of the soul' was seen to depict some of the dynamics in spiritual life, specifically allowing 'the daily process of allowing God to come'. In this way, the landscape model was perceived to show a mysticism of everyday life.

Like maps, the landscape model is general and selective. When compared to the pilgrimage model, the landscape model can be seen to be limited through its unfamiliarity and complexity. Moreover, there are points where the natural world is not amenable to a metaphorical extension. This is most evident in situations involving human choice. In the survey, some of those interviewed found the landscape model reductionistic, and multi-dimensional modelling was suggested. The model was also criticised for not being inclusive of other religions and it was posited that the model be extended beyond the limitation of a Christian perspective.

From the survey, it could be seen that there is scope for further development of the model. This could be done through looking at studies of landscape in greater detail and paralleling these with comparable studies relating to spiritual life. In addition, it might prove insightful if both the pilgrim and the landscape models could be used in a long term study of spiritual direction with a group of people who are amenable to such metaphors.

If Christian spiritual life is looked at, not in terms of a pilgrimage through a landscape, but as the landscape itself, then the landscape model of spiritual life points towards an encounter with Christ in the present moment, and in this way it complements the model of pilgrimage. In addition, the landscape model provides a framework in which some of the different understandings of mysticism can be situated. Moreover, it points towards a mysticism of everyday life. Although the apophatic moment of encounter is secret, through the model we are enabled to glimpse a 'landscape of the soul' where 'the life movement of the Spirit' is expressed in the rhythm of a life lived in Christ.[4]

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[4] J. G. Lubbock, 1990, *Landscapes of the Soul*, 37.

APPENDIX A

SOURCES FOR THE LIFE OF CLARE OF ASSISI

CHRONOLOGICAL[1]

1. *Privilege of Poverty* (1216 version of Innocent IV)
2. Letter of Jacques de Vitry (1216)
3. Letter of Cardinal Ugolino dei Conti di Segni (about 1220)
4. *First Life* [of Francis of Assisi] of Thomas of Celano (1228)
5. Letter of Gregory IX (1228)
6. *Privilege of Poverty* (version of Gregory IX, 1228)
7. Constitutions of Ugolino (dating back to 1218-19, but the version which has come down to us is that of 1228)
8. Letters of Clare to Agnes of Bohemia (1234-53)
9. *Second Life* [of Francis of Assisi] of Thomas of Celano (1246-47)
10. Rule of Innocent IV (1247)
11. Testament and Blessing of Clare (1253)
12. Rule of Clare (1253)
13. Letter of notification of her death (1253)
14. Process of Canonisation (1253)
15. Office of St Clare (1254)
16. *Rhyming Life* (1254-55)
17. Bull of the canonisation of Clare: *Clara claris praeclara*
18. Life of St Clare the Virgin (1255)

COMPARATIVE[2]

1. Writings of Clare
    - Rule
    - Testament
    - Blessing and letters
2. Process of canonisation

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[1] Marco Bartoli, 1989, *Clare of Assisi*, 10 (italics in the original).
[2] Ibid., 11.

3. Contemporary witnesses
    - *First* and *Second Life* by Thomas of Celano
    - Letter of Jacques de Vitry
    - Letters of Cardinal Ugolino
    - *Legend of Perugia*
4. Juridical sources
    - *Privilege of Poverty*
    - Constitutions of Cardinal Ugolino
    - Rule of Innocent IV
5. Hagiographical sources
    - Letter of notification of Clare's death
    - Bull of canonisation
    - *Rhyming Life*
    - *Life of St Clare the Virgin*

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

DATE:
NO:
GENDER:
AGE:
MARITAL STAUS:
OCCUPATION (FORMER IF RETIRED/UNEMPLOYED):
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION:

PART A: PERSONAL UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE

1. Please reflect for a moment and then in one or two short sentences state your most deeply held belief about ultimate reality.

2. What do mean if you use the word mysticism?

3. Could you give a personal example of anything in your life which stands out in your memory as mystical? [Prompt: age, antecedents, feelings, cognitive or noetic elements, consequences.]
The following is a questionnaire developed in the 70's by an American, Ralph Hood. It is a measure of reported mystical experience. The questions are "brief descriptions of a number of experiences. Some descriptions refer to phenomenon that you may have experienced while others refer to phenomenon that you may not have experienced. In each case note the description carefully" and then circle the appropriate response:

-2 This description is definitely not true of my own experience or experiences.
-1 This description is probably not true of my own experience or experiences.
? I cannot decide
+1 This description is probably true of my own experience or experiences.
+2 This description is definitely true of my own experience or experiences.

1	I have had an experience which was both timeless and spaceless.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
2	I have never had an experience which was incapable of being expressed in words.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
3	I have had an experience in which something greater than myself seemed to absorb me.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
4	I have had an experience in which everything seemed to disappear from my mind until I was conscious only of a void.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
5	I have experienced profound joy.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
6	I have never had an experience in which I felt myself to be absorbed as one with all things.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
7	I have never experienced a perfectly peaceful state.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2

8	I have never had an experience in which I felt as if all things were alive.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
9	I have never had an experience which seemed holy to me.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
10	I have never had an experience in which all things seemed to be aware.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
11	I have had an experience in which I had no sense of time or space.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
12	I have had an experience in which I realised the oneness of myself with all things.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
13	I have had an experience in which a new view of reality was revealed to me.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
14	I have never experienced anything to be divine.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
15	I have never had an experience in which time and space were non-existent.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
16	I have never experienced anything that I could call ultimate reality.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
17	I have had an experience in which ultimate reality was revealed to me.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
18	I have had an experience in which I felt that all was perfection at the time.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
19	I have had an experience in which I felt everything in the world to be part of the same whole.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
20	I have had an experience which I knew to be sacred.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
21	I have never had an experience which I was unable to express adequately through language.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
22	I have had an experience which left me with a feeling of awe.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
23	I have had an experience that is impossible to communicate.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
24	I have never had an experience in which my own self seemed to merge into something greater.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
25	I have never had an experience which left me with a feeling of wonder.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
26	I have never had an experience in which deeper aspects of reality were revealed to me.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
27	I have never had an experience in which time, place, and distance were meaningless.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
28	I have never had an experience in which I became aware of a unity to all things.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
29	I have had an experience in which all things seemed to be conscious.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
30	I have never had an experience in which all things seemed to be unified into a single whole.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
31	I have had an experience in which I felt that nothing is ever really dead.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2
32	I have had an experience that cannot be expressed in words.	-2 -1 ? +1 +2

Comments:

4. "Between June 1969 and June 1970, Professor Sir Alister Hardy, requested through the media accounts of a certain type of religious experience. The following is an example of his request made in an article in the *Observer* on the 8th March 1970".[1]

> To further his research...Professor Hardy is seeking the help of *Observer* readers. He is not at present studying the more ecstatic or mystical states, but more general feeling exemplified in this following quotation from an address by Baroness Mary Stocks to the World Congress of Faiths:

[1] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 18.

> 'Beatrice Webb,' she said, in discussing her autobiography, 'was conscious of experiencing a sense and purpose outside herself - which she called "feeling" and which was sometimes induced by appreciation of great music or corporate worship. But her experience went further than this nebulous, fleeting "feeling" - because as a result of it she achieved a religious interpretation of the universe which satisfied and upheld her and enabled her to seek continuous guidance in prayer - and this without compromising her intellectual integrity.[2]

Do you have or have you been conscious of, and perhaps influenced by, some such power? How would you describe this sense of presence? [Prompt: age, antecedents, feelings, cognitive or noetic elements, consequences.]

PART B: THE WORKING SITUATION

6. What is the nature of your listening situation?

7. How long have you been doing this?

8. What is the intensity of your listening situation?
   Many people?
   Few people?
   In periods of less than a year?
   In periods greater than a year?

9. In your work with other people, have the following experiences been reported?

1	An experience which was both timeless and spaceless.	N Y
2	An experience which was incapable of being expressed in words.	N Y
3	An experience in which something greater than myself seemed to absorb me.	N Y
4	An experience of profound joy.	N Y
5	An experience in which I realised the oneness of myself with all things.	N Y
6	An experience in which a new view of reality was revealed to me.	N Y
7	An experience which left me with a feeling of awe.	N Y
8	An experience in which all things seemed to be conscious.	N Y

10. How do you respond if experiences such as those in the last question are reported? [Prompt: affective, cognitive, behavioural, other.]

PART C: THE MODEL OF THE LANDSCAPE OF THE SOUL

Introduction to Model followed by questions:

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[2] Alister Hardy, 1979, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 18.

11. Is such a model useful to you in understanding Christian mysticism?

12. Does this model reflect your experience in listening the narratives of others?

13. In what way would you change or adapt the model?

14. Do you have any other comments?

APPENDIX C

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE SURVEY

This study of spiritual directors is basically qualitative with some descriptive and nonparametric statistics. As Matthew B Miles and A Michael Huberman observe: 'Qualitative analyses can be evocative, illuminating, masterful - and wrong'.[1] The verification and validation of qualitative research is problematic with some researchers arguing that by its very nature qualitative research lies outside the realm of objective assessment.[2] There are several sources for error in qualitative research: patterns and trends may be discerned in random data, bias may be introduced through inappropriate weighting of responses, cases may be selected to fit preconceived ideas, and more obvious or extreme cases may be examined.[3] Various measures which have been developed for exploring the reliability and validity of qualitative research. Miles and Huberman describe twenty-six measures which may be used to asses the reliability and validity of qualitative research.[4] The procedures used in this study include the development of a consistent interview practice, a pilot study, question testing, and an interrater reliability check.

Validity

Validity refers to the accuracy of the method and measurements in relation to the subject which is being examined. William A Belson writes that a 'valid measure is one that produces accurate results about the matter being investigated'.[5] Internal validity is concerned with the relationship between the data which is collected and the questions which are being asked whereas external validity is interested in the representativeness of the findings to other groups.

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[1] Matthew B Miles and A Michael Huberman, 1994, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, London: Sage Publications, 262.
[2] David Silverman, 1993, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, London: Sage Publications, 145-146, 153-154.
[3] Matthew B Miles and A Michael Huberman, Qualitative Data Analysis, 263; David Silverman. *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 153.
[4] Matthew B Miles and A Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 262-280.
[5] William A Belson,Validity in Survey Research, 9-10.

The internal validity of a survey may be weakened by the introduction of error into the data.[6] The interviewer may not be consistent and the wording of questions may be changed. In this study, the questions were written down and read carefully. Two other places where error may be introduced arises when the interviewee misunderstands the question being asked or questions are suggestive. These two issues were addressed in a pilot study and with question-testing prior to the final survey. Error may also be introduced by the order in which questions are asked particularly with respect to rating. Although two structured questions were employed, rating, or ranking, was not predominant in this survey. Other areas for error include careless replies from the interviewees, memory decay and unwillingness to admit ignorance or give intimate information. Careless replies in surveys can arise because people are not interested or because the time is unsuitable. The people who were interviewed for this study had been contacted in advance to ascertain if they would be interested. After the sample selection was made, the interviewees were contacted and times that were convenient to them were arranged. Memory decay occurs when people are asked to recall past behaviour. In this survey, memory decay could have arisen with respect to the introduction to the model. Therefore, diagrams were used to aid description and memory. The problem of unwillingness to give information did not explicitly arise although it is recognised that the responses to the open-ended questions could have been implicitly circumspect.

There are several methods available for testing the accuracy of a survey procedure.[7] Three methods were employed in this study. The first method consists of evaluating the questions with known principles in survey design. This involved explicitly formulating what each question was to explore, the type of question, and the wording of questions.

Another method of validation is a pilot study. After the questionnaire was

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[6] Ibid., 10-20.

[7] William Belson lists seven methods by which the validity of survey design and data may be validated. Not all of the methods were appropriate for this study. An example of one these methods is cross-checking information received in the survey against known criterion. For instance, in a hospital survey outpatients could be asked the time of their last appointment. Their replies could be validated by checking the hospital's records. (William A. Belson, *Validity in Survey Research*, 22-38.)

developed, it was administered to three volunteers who would have been eligible for the survey.[8] The pilot study provided an opportunity to observe any difficulties that the interviewee or the interviewer encountered. As it has been observed, on the basis of the pilot study, changes were made to both the questions and the diagrammatic presentation.

The last method used to validate the survey schedule was 'question testing'. This was applied in conjunction with the pilot study. 'Question-testing' involves exploring with an interviewee how they understand a particular question in order to see if the question is likely to be misunderstood.[9] The method outlined by Belson was used. First, the interview was conducted as intended. After the interview was completed a question was repeated and the interviewee was asked to give the same reply. Next, the person was asked to explain how he or she had arrived at that answer. Through a series of questions, the principal components of the question were examined. This technique was used to test questions relating to a personal example of mysticism, reports of mysticism in work, and personal usefulness of the model.

External validity as well as internal validity needs to be considered. External validity relates to the representativeness of the findings. This concerns whether or not the results of the study are applicable to the larger population from which the survey sample was selected. Although steps were taken to introduce random selection into the group interviewed, non-probability sampling was used to generate the initial pool of spiritual directors and therapists. Consequently, the sample population may or may not be representative of a hypothetical population of all spiritual directors and therapists who are interested in the spiritual side of therapy. Therefore, although some of the findings are analysed using descriptive statistics, these results cannot be generalised with confidence beyond the sample group.

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[8] In their Guidelines for pilot testing, Arlene Fink and Jacqueline Kosecoff suggest that fewer people are needed for surveys with a small number of items on it and testing should stop when it can be seen that little more improvement can be made. They also observe that a pilot can be administered twice to the same group. In this instance, the survey was given to one of the volunteers twice. (Arlene Fink and Jacqueline Kosecoff, 1985, *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by Step Guide*, London: Sage, 51-52.)

[9] Ibid., 29.

Reliability

Reliability has been defined as 'the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions'.[10] Validity and reliability are closely associated. A measure may be reliable but not necessarily valid. A common example used to illustrate the relationship between validity and reliability is the broken thermometer. A thermometer may give a reading of 10°C on several trials. However, if the temperature that is being measured is 30°C, although the readings are consistent, they are not valid.

Reliability may be tested in several ways.[11] For this survey, interrater reliability was checked in a small study. Five answers were randomly chosen from the survey. The interrater was asked to code the answers according to the reading guide accompanying each question. Although six people trained in social science research methodology agreed to participate in this exercise, only four sets of questions were returned. Agreement in coding of the data was 94% and interrater reliability (r_{tt}) was significant at $p \leq .01$. There was close agreement between the formal analysis carried out in the main study and the understanding, interpretation, and coding by the four raters. Therefore, it is assumed that formal analysis may be accepted as adequate.

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[10] M Hammersley quoted by David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 145.

[11] Evelyn Hatch and Anne Lazaraton describe four methods to test for reliability. The test-retest method correlates the results from the same test given twice within a short period of time. The parallel test method correlates the results from two tests which should be the same and which are administered at the same time. Interrater reliability compares the consistency in coding between different raters. Internal consistency may also be tested. Using the split-half method, the data is divided into two and treated as if it came from two separate tests and the correlation between the two tests calculated. (Evelyn Hatch and Anne Lazaraton, 1991, *The Research Manual: Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics*, New York: Newbury House Publishers, 529-539.)

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